APRIL 30, 1984 • $1.50

## Why can't we just let the banks go bust?

DENIS DONOGHUE, JOSEF ŠKVORECKÝ, PETER BERGER, ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON BOOKS

# THE NEW REPUBLIC

# The end of the rainbow

**Jesse Jackson's message**
*Morton Kondracke*

**What the black pols think**
*Barbara Reynolds*

**Pennsylvania and after**
*Sidney Blumenthal*

**The party's agony**
*The editors*

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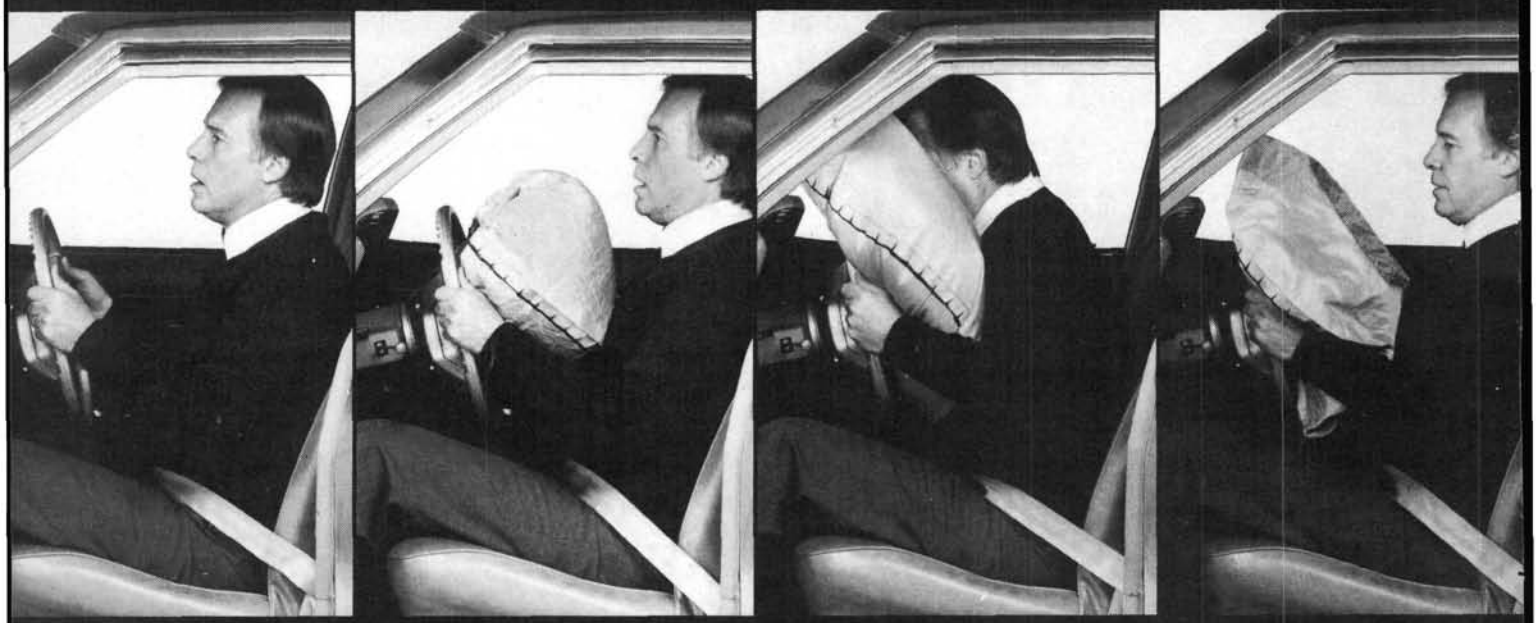

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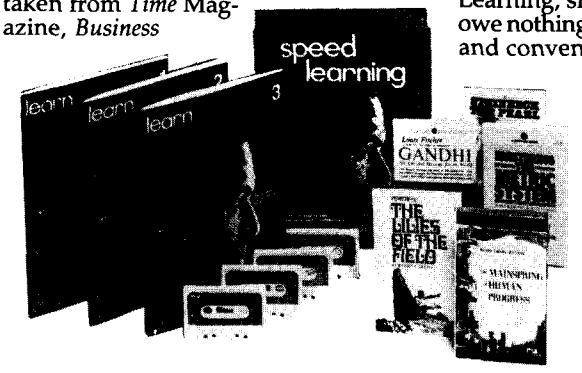


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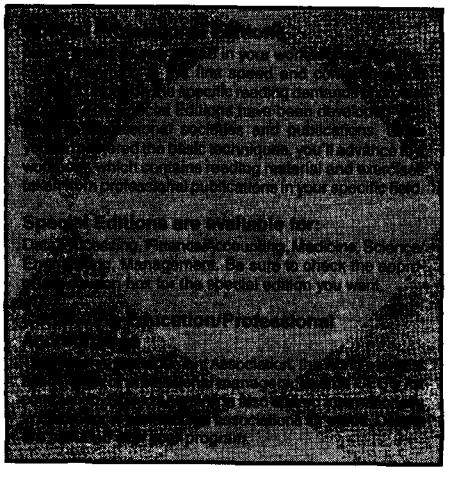

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# CORRESPONDENCE

## NO THIRD CAMP

*To the editors:*

In your editorial "The Democrats and Force" (TNR, March 19), you criticize the Democratic Presidential candidates for opposing assistance to the *contras* in Nicaragua, arguing that the *contras* have helped to foster a more cooperative attitude on the part of the Sandinista government. However, in another editorial in the same issue, "Argentine Opening," you praise President Raúl Alfonsín for ending Argentine support for our right-wing allies in Nicaragua.

This contradiction exemplifies the dilemma of anti-Communist liberals concerning Central America. We dread the geopolitical consequences of the communization of that region. Yet it cannot be disputed that in helping to resist Marxist guerrilla movements in El Salvador and Guatemala, and in harassing the government of Nicaragua, we must collaborate with thugs.

Implicit in your editorials is, I think, an assumption that in places like El Salvador and Guatemala there exists a liberal equivalant of the Trotskyite Third Camp, which the correct U.S. policy can assist in the creation of democratic regimes. Like its radical predecessor, the liberal Third Camp is an illusion masking the need to make hard choices.

For myself, I can no longer stand to watch my tax dollars used by the death squads to slaughter peasants, left-wing nuns, trade union officials, and anyone else. So I would cut off military aid to El Salvador and Guatemala, while understanding and admitting the bad political results that such a course brings about. I wish there were a way out, but there simply isn't.

PETER M. CONNOLLY
*Washington, D.C.*

## STRONG DEFENSE

*To the editors:*

Harvey Klehr's review of our book *Right in Her Soul: The Life of Anna Louise Strong* ("A Fellow Traveler Forever," TNR, March 19) raises two criticisms. He claims that biographers have "an obligation to judge and assess the choices" made by their subject. His second claim follows immediately: our obligation in writing about Miss Strong was to condemn her.

The first claim reflects a rather prosaic notion of biography. In any case, the mere selection of material constitutes judgment. We do not hide anything; indeed, Mr. Klehr indicates that we make it "crystal clear" how she "fooled herself."

But Mr. Klehr requires "condemnation." Let us assume Mr. Klehr had never heard of Miss Strong. Was there no material in our book for his judgment? Did we need to *tell* him to condemn her? Part of what we tried to do was to re-create the dilemmas that actually existed for those who thought that it had fallen to the historical lot of the U.S.S.R. to save world civilization and to provide lessons from which the rest of the world might learn. If in the course of learning these lessons one learned also of atrocities, it might be said that the existence of sin was not a reason for doubting in God's ultimate grace. Mr. Klehr's demand for condemnation must then be recast. When can one reasonably have expected Miss Strong to realize that the "locomotive of history" was not going in the direction in which she had thought? It is very clear from our book that starting at about the time of the purge trials she began to extricate herself from involvement with the U.S.S.R. She chose to follow world history to the only place where, she thought, "the ways of God" might be more apparent: China.

To claim that this was merely the choice of one totalitarianism or another, as Mr. Klehr does, strikes us as simply wrong. What Mr. Klehr misses about our account of Miss Strong's life is that her pursuit of what she thought important about the new socialist societies was always with a view to making this available to Americans for American use. We do not think the attempt to expand political possibilities an enterprise worthy of condemnation, even when it is not done along just the lines that Mr. Klehr would like it to be.

HELENE KEYSSAR
TRACY B. STRONG
*San Diego, California*

*Mr. Klehr replies:*

Anna Louise Strong admired totalitarian societies that deliberately murdered millions of innocent people. She consciously lied in public statements about those regimes. She deceived her fellow Americans. To my mind, all that merits condemnation. Ms. Keyssar and Mr. Strong's last sentence confirms what I said in my review: they are unwilling to judge their subject.

## PRIMARY PROBLEM

*To the editors:*

Your editorial, "Primary Lunacy" (TNR, March 26), identifies the problems with the Presidential nominating process but misses the solution. You think that the primary process is reformable and can avoid the anomalies of untested candidates coming out of the woodwork to lead a complex, heterogeneous national party. But since 1968 the rules changes by successive commissions in the Democratic Party solved earlier problems only to create new ones. The difficulty is the primary process itself, which mistakenly applies plebiscitarian principles to the nominating process. Choosing a nominee is best left to those who pay serious attention to politics, as in the European parliamentary systems whose leadership selection methods you admire.

While we can't import parliamentary government, we can replace direct primaries with an open, democratically run national system of state caucuses that will encourage grass-roots participation by those not now well represented by organized constituencies. If you favor responsible party government, you have to favor abolition of the direct primary.

PAUL GOODMAN
*Davis, California*

## SEUSS NEWS

*To the editors:*

In "Rx From Dr. Seuss" (TNR, March 26), TRB refers to Kick-a-poo as a nonsense phrase invented by Al Capp. I hardly think that members of the Kickapoo Native American tribe of Wisconsin and Michigan think of it as a nonsense phrase; no more so, perhaps, than phrases such as Al-sa-tian, Se-phar-dic, or Ma-ce-do-ni-an. Perhaps some sort of apology is in order.

FRANCISCO LAMELAS
*Newburgh, New York*

*TRB replies:*

Sorry.



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**COVER** Photograph of Jesse Jackson by Andy Levin/Black Star.

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# TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

## YOUR NUMBER IS UP

On Channel 7, a fellow has been rushed to the hospital with a stupid grin frozen on his face. Doctors tell his wife he's suffering from "smilitis" as a result of winning the Maryland lottery, and "He'll be smiling for the rest of his life." Meanwhile, over on Channel 4, a demographically sound collection of morons (black man, rich white lady with poodle, and so on) extols the District of Columbia lottery in verse. A man dressed as a messenger boy shrieks,

*Oye*, don't panic!
I've got the luck of the Hispanic!

Local Hispanics found his couplet demeaning, and that particular commercial was taken off the air. Really, though, the whole state lottery business demeans all of us.

Seventeen states and D.C. now run these things, which generate over $6 billion a year in revenue. They started in the 1960s on the theory that some people were going to gamble anyway, and the state might as well get the money instead of the mob. Now, all the genius of American marketing is applied to tempting previously sane citizens into wasting their money. In Maryland the average adult now spends $3.80 a week on the lottery.

There are three basic types of game. One is a direct imitation of the illegal numbers racket, in which the player bets fifty cents or a dollar on a three-digit number between 1 and 999. The winning number is picked daily. One reason this game has failed to wipe out the illegal number is that the mob pays better odds: 550 or 600 to 1 for a winning ticket, compared with 500 from the state. And the illegal winnings are, er, tax-free. The state number may even have helped the illegal numbers business by reducing the stigma of playing. In Maryland the mob runs a convenient "night number" game, using the state's own winning number—which the state is kind enough to publicize on the evening news.

Then there's the "instant lottery," in which you buy a card for a dollar and scratch off a plastic coating to see if you've won. Scientific Games, Inc., the company that manufactures instant lottery tickets for most states, has developed a variety of gimmicks for creating a phony sense of excitement out of what is basically a yes-or-no proposition. For example, you might have to scratch off three numbers, to see if they add up to either seven or eleven or twenty-one. Losing cards will tend to miss by one point: "Heartstoppers," they're called. To sell the most tickets with the smallest payout, the trick is to have one big prize for saliva and publicity value and lots of trivial payoffs to string people along.

The newest and sickest game is Lotto, in which the player, for a dollar, picks five or six numbers between one and forty. There's a weekly drawing, and the "pool" (minus the state's cut) grows until there's a winner. This is the game that's been producing all the recent QUEENS GRANDMOTHER WINS $10 MILLION headlines. Obviously the prizes in Lotto are so big because the chance of winning is so small—1 in 658,008 in the D.C. Lotto, which starts this month. But the ads don't dwell on that.

Indeed, lottery ads usually don't mention the odds at all, or misrepresent them: your odds of "winning," which means winning as little as a free ticket, but not your odds of winning a big prize. The ads also don't mention how much of your ticket money is being skimmed off by the state. Usually it's over half. The pitch is simply: "You Can Win!" Or, as one state slogan insidiously puts it, in an almost perfect inversion of the truth: "You can't win if you don't play."

This kind of deceptive promotion would be flatly illegal if state governments weren't exempt from federal trade regulations. So would the practice of advertising "million-dollar" prizes which turn out to mean $50,000 a year for twenty years, which is more like $400,000 in current value—or, after taxes, more like a quarter of a million. What would the F.T.C. say to a private company that instructed its dealers: "Tell customers how many high-tier [big-prize] tickets remain in the game," but not how many worthless tickets remain? Here are some more "simple tips" from "Lot-Letter," a D.C. Lottery Board newsletter:

"[E]mphasize winning tickets purchased at your business. Encourage ALL of your customers to buy . . . tickets, saying something like 'You could be the next Instant Millionaire.' Personalize your sales pitch by telling anecdotes about winners . . . or by courting your regular customers' special interest ('If you win, you could buy that new car you've been talking about!')."

Not all of the lottery revenues siphoned off from the players benefit the taxpayers. Lotteries have turned into another civic gravy train. The D.C. Lottery took in $54 million last year, returned $26 million to the suckers, spent $15 million on administration, and deposited only $12 million in the city treasury. Firms like Scientific Games (a division of Bally, the national gambling conglomerate) get a piece of the action. In D.C. at least, another piece goes to local minority firms, which the national companies must team up with if they want the business. Sales agents get another piece. And there's plenty left over for "consultants" like a prominent D.C. politico, who got $24,000 from the Lottery Board recently for "determining marketing concepts" and another $2,500 for arranging a "retreat" for Board members at a Maryland resort.

This is embarrassing. You needn't share the Tory enthusiasms of a George Will, who believes government has the duty to instill virtue in the citizenry, to be appalled at the spectacle of government promoting vice like a carnival barker. And you needn't share Ralph Nader's enthusiasm for government-as-nanny, protecting people at every turn from the wiles of others and their own bad judgment, to be distressed about government itself duping people and encouraging stupidity for profit.

But for believers in active government, what's most offensive about state lotteries is their cruelty. This is clearest in the games with astronomical odds and huge payoffs, which tend to blossom in uncertain economic times. With these games, government holds out false hope to people, while shirking its duty to provide real hope. In state lotteries, government profits from its own failure.



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THE NEW REPUBLIC
APRIL 30, 1984

# RAINBOW'S END

The Presidential campaign of the Rev. Jesse Jackson is beginning to take on the aspect of a full-blown American tragedy. Despite the excitement, even joy, that envelops the candidate as he travels the urban black archipelago, his candidacy is becoming an instrument for the destruction of the very dream that created the movement that ultimately made the candidacy possible—the dream of an America free of every form of racial division, racial hatred, and racial injustice. From the beginning of the Jackson campaign we were skeptical of its chances of advancing that dream. As we noted at the time ("Jackson Jumps In," TNR, November 28, 1983), Mr. Jackson offered a vision of democracy as a spoils system, of rhetoric as arousal without persuasion, of politics as an exercise in the cultivation of false hopes, and of policy as sterile, marginal posturing beyond the fringes of the national consensus. But the Jackson campaign as it has played itself out has been far more devastating than could have been imagined at its outset. Its potential for blighting the future of interracial politics and for wounding the Democratic Party now seems great indeed.

Two paths led from the motel in Memphis where Martin Luther King Jr. died a martyr's death in 1968. They might be designated the path of protest and the path of politics, symbolized respectively by two great legislative achievements of the King era, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Jesse Jackson has been the most prominent exponent of the path of protest, Andrew Young of the path of politics. Those who joined Mr. Young on his path—Maynard Jackson, Basil Patterson, Barbara Jordan, Tom Bradley, Coleman Young, Wilson Goode, and many, many others—have pursued a strategy of interracial cooperation, both by inclination and by necessity. (In most cases they simply could not be elected by black votes alone.) It has also been a strategy that is incremental, that implicitly envisions a gradual process of political maturation, that relies on individual black politicians who have the talent, patience, and energy to assemble the experience and credentials that enable them to take the next step, whatever it may be: city hall or the House of Representatives today, a governor's mansion or the U.S. Senate tomorrow. There is little doubt that this path would eventually have taken a black man or woman to the Presidency or the Vice Presidency, perhaps before the turn of the century. For the moment, Jesse Jackson may have succeeded in turning this path into a dead end so far as nationwide elective office is concerned.

Mr. Jackson's path has been different. Alone among the dozen or so most important black politicians in America he has had no experience in building interracial coalitions. Nor has he had the experience of holding a public office that entails legal and moral responsibilities to white as well as black citizens. His technique has been to organize blacks into solid constituencies of protest which then make collective demands upon, and bargain with, the larger society. There is nothing inherently illegitimate or dishonorable about this technique in itself, but it requires little in the way of organizing across racial lines. On the contrary, it creates a certain incentive to keeping the races unmixed, the better to serve as clear bargaining units. That is why, even with the best will in the world, the technique translates poorly into democratic electoral politics on a national scale. Mr. Jackson apparently recognized this; hence his plan for a "Rainbow Coalition," a political alliance of the downtrodden, organized group by group (Hispanics, women, etc.) rather than individual by individual. The "Rainbow Coalition" never coalesced—at any rate not around Mr. Jackson. The idea if not the name had been a principal element of the Walter Mondale campaign long before Mr. Jackson got into the race, and it is Mr. Mondale



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who has put together the real "Rainbow Coalition." Whatever slim chance Mr. Jackson had of "going rainbow" began to evaporate with the revelations of his chronic anti-Semitism, of which the "Hymie" episode was only an unusually egregious example. That chance has now definitively disappeared. With the help of Minister Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam, Mr. Jackson has turned his rainbow into a violent black thunderhead.

From the beginning, then, Mr. Jackson's campaign was more "racial" than interracial: a campaign that asked blacks to vote for a black because he is black. It tried and failed to be something more, and now it has become something less. Louis Farrakhan has plunged it into moral squalor. His threat to murder the reporter who divulged Mr. Jackson's "Hymie" slur, and to murder the reporter's wife in the bargain, was so horrifying that it has eclipsed Mr. Farrakhan's more general—though in their historical resonances perhaps uglier—threats against Jews. It has also tended to eclipse Mr. Jackson's responses, which have been grotesque. The candidate blandly pictured Mr. Farrakhan's threat against the reporter as a "conflict" between "two very able professionals caught in a cycle that could be damaging to their careers." He said he does "not support" death threats because they are "counterproductive." He eventually allowed that the threat was "wrong," but complained (on NBC's "Meet the Press") that questions about why he declines to disavow Mr. Farrakhan constitute "a form of harassment."

The Farrakhan episode has greatly sharpened the agony that the Jackson campaign has imposed upon people of good will on all sides, but it has not fundamentally changed the dilemmas that campaign has created.

FOR BLACKS, the Jackson campaign has become yet another badge of isolation. Mr. Jackson forces blacks to choose between solidarity and civility, between racial pride and racial peace—choices no one should have had to make. Despite the cheers and the chants, in the long run it is a sad and bitter thing that the first seriously waged black Presidential campaign in American history should have forfeited any real claim to the higher, universal values that energized the civil rights movement. It is sadder still in view of what Mr. Jackson had to offer: strong roots in the black church, the community's most durable institution, and in the integrationist wing of the '60s black movement; physical magnetism and a tone of prophetic eloquence; a rhetoric of self-reliance, not dependence; stress on such values as family, education, and work. Yet Mr. Jackson's leadership produces a politics of race and little else. It should surprise no one if his supporters' disappointment in him sometimes expresses itself as anger at his tormentors. Even as he has rallied the ghetto, Mr. Jackson has built a ghetto around himself and those who have placed their faith in him. But they, not he, will pay the price for his prejudice and parochialism.

The racial isolation brought about by the Jackson campaign applies equally well to whites, of course. Many of them would have been eager to "go rainbow"; Mr. Jackson has given them no reason to do so, and every reason not to. Especially heartbreaking—and especially contemptible—has been the wedge Mr. Jackson has driven between Jews and blacks. In the past, whatever their psychic complexes about each other, their alliance has held. As recently as last year, Jews voted for Mr. Goode in Philadelphia and Mr. Washington in Chicago at much higher levels than did other whites, even though Mr. Washington's opponent was Jewish. In Los Angeles, Jews have been the backbone of Tom Bradley's organization. And polls still show measurably less anti-Jewish feeling among blacks than among white non-Jews. It is far from certain that this pattern will hold true for next year's polls, and next year's municipal elections. This year, white is voting white and black is voting black.

All these dilemmas meet in the dilemma of the Democratic Party. In the wake of the "Hymie" flap, Mr. Jackson's fellow candidates found it prudent to focus more on praise for his (belated) admission and apology than on reproaches for the slur itself. After the Farrakhan shock, it is not so easy to look on the sunny side. Mr. Mondale and Mr. Hart have done the minimum that decency requires, condemning Mr. Farrakhan's threats and venturing some indirect criticism of Mr. Jackson himself. They have not yet met the requirements of social and political morality, which are stricter than those of decency.

Mr. Mondale and Mr. Hart are reticent for good reasons as well as bad ones. They do not wish to anger Mr. Jackson's supporters, whom the eventual nominee will need in November: political cowardice, or maybe just political prudence. But they have higher motives too, we expect. Presumably they hope they can help avoid imposing a greater measure of bitterness and division on American society than that which Mr. Jackson has already rendered inevitable. They may still imagine that if we all hold very still, the country can pass smoothly though this distressing business until the convention is over and the Jackson campaign is safely behind us. If so, the attack by George Bush should disabuse them of that fantasy. The Vice President and his boss have nothing to lose with blacks and much to gain with Jews by helping Mr. Jackson set the two groups against each other. If the Democrats keep silent, the Reagan campaign will see to it that they pay dear.

In the end the issue is a moral one; it can't, and shouldn't, be avoided. Little more than a generation ago, a third of the Democratic Party was racist. At national conventions, the delegations from the states of what used to be called the Black Belt presented the mocking spectacle of row upon row of white faces. That dilemma, part of the American dilemma, was not resolved by avoidance. The present dilemma is not of the same magnitude; nor, measured by the standard of human suffering and social injustice, is it of the same urgency. But it is cut from the same moral cloth nonetheless.

The Democratic Party and its candidates must speak out. Reaganism strains the social fabric; the addition of Jacksonism strains it even more. To paraphrase Mr. Jackson, the challenge to Mr. Mondale and Mr. Hart will be to



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condemn the sin without condemning the followers of the sinner. Mr. Jackson has been called the George Wallace of 1984, and in certain ways the comparison is apt. But there are important differences. Mr. Wallace's rivals could denounce his racial views without reserve partly because both they and he were of the same race. It is far more delicate when the racial and ideological fault lines coincide; and that makes the task more difficult. On the other hand, while anti-black prejudice was at the center of Mr. Wallace's appeal, black pride, not anti-Jewish prejudice, is at the center of Mr. Jackson's; and that makes the task easier. Mr. Mondale and Mr. Hart must contrive to demonstrate that their respect for Mr. Jackson is really a function of their respect for his followers.

One way Mr. Mondale and Mr. Hart can begin to show that respect is by taking Mr. Jackson's policy positions seriously. As Morton Kondracke points out elsewhere in this issue (see "The Jacksonian Persuasion," page 13), they have not done so up to now. In part this is because Mr. Jackson, unlike his colleagues, has no chance of being elected President, and therefore his views do not have the status of potential government policies. But in part it is something more unpleasant. Mr. Jackson's rivals must try to hold him to the same standards—moral and political—to which they hold each other. To the extent they do not do this, they are guilty, at best, of condescension. To the extent that they do, they will help Mr. Jackson fulfill what still could be his positive historical role: to make some contribution to opening the way for the candidate of the future, whoever he or she may be, who becomes the first black President of the United States.

Two visions of an industrial future.

# STEEL AND ROSES

*Philadelphia*

THE DEBATE between Gary Hart and Walter Mondale that had been obscured by negative advertising in Illinois and bitter personal attacks in New York surfaced most clearly in the Pennsylvania primary. According to Mondale's literature, handed out on Philadelphia street corners, it was a debate of "good ideas versus 'new ideas.' " By Hart's reasoning, it was a contest of the "future versus the past." Behind these slogans were detailed proposals for reviving the steel industry, which once was the keystone of the Keystone State. More than a century ago, at the Centennial Exposition of 1876, Philadelphians marked the past by celebrating the future. A huge engine, symbol of industry and energy, was the marvel of the exhibition. At the dawn of Pennsylvania's Iron Age, the state's economy rested upon a trinity of steel, coal, and railroads. By 1984 these ancient industries were in decline; yet there were few burgeoning high-tech firms here. The steelworkers, miners, and railroaders had a sense of irrevocable loss. In the industrial towns and cities, a way of life that seemed eternal was endangered. The workers wanted a change to reverse this decline. They remembered a dynamic world and yearned for one that didn't move relentlessly to the conclusion they now confronted. These feelings and images set the parameters of the debate.

THE ACTUAL face-to-face debate of the candidates occurred in Pittsburgh on April 5. In his question to Mondale, Hart inquired about his opponent's precise plan to modernize the steel industry. Mondale responded with a lengthy *apologia pro sua vita*, a detailed defense of the Carter Administration's record. He then mentioned the Chrysler and Wheeling-Pittsburgh bailouts, which Hart had opposed. The Chrysler bailout was no mere debating point to Mondale. It was, in fact, the central organizing principle of his campaign.

In the Mondale iconography, America is Chrysler—a troubled smokestack company in need of rescue. Once the rescue is achieved, everything will return to normal, as in, say, 1964—the year of the last Democratic landslide. On April 7 Mondale traveled to the Wheeling-Pittsburgh plant, where he explained how the industrial world could be restored. The workers there had already experienced the rebirth. Mondale spoke in a folksy style. Heads nodded silently in agreement with every point; there were chuckles at every joke. He captivated this older labor crowd, his natural constituency, like Jesse Jackson entrances black church congregations. "We're having a fight over whether your jobs should be saved," Mondale said. "I say yes. Gary Hart says no." Not only had Hart voted against the Wheeling loan but also the Chrysler one, which Mondale called "America at its best." Then he raised this notion to a theory of history, an analysis of what had gone wrong. He did not mention the rise of new technologies, inexorable changes in the global marketplace, or shifts in the international divison of labor. The explanation, at least when Mondale talked to these workers, was partisan. Their problems were due to a Republican President who's "out of touch."

If America is Chrysler, then who is Mondale? He is a battling man of the people—Lee Iacocca, of course. This comparison isn't lost on the candidate's strategists. "The symbolism of Chrysler includes the symbolism of Iacocca," says James Johnson, the campaign chairman. "It means fighting back, which we've been doing." On the stump, Mondale told crowds: "What you see is what you get." He depicted himself as "steady . . . sure . . . reliable . . . consistent." Yet even as he convinced voters that they should support him because he was unchangeable, he was undergoing a transformation. Over and over, he chanted: "I'm a people's Democrat."

His schedule and television advertising were syncopated. He landed at every conceivable disaster area, including Three Mile Island. Speaking with the nuclear Stonehenge



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in the background, he noted, "You don't need to dream up a new idea to know what to do here." His criticism of Hart was as harsh as ever. "My opponent has a record that can't be followed." On the air, his ads ripped into Hart's character. Assorted average citizens were shown spontaneously saying things like: "We don't know where Gary Hart stands." The "red telephone" ad, summoning fear about an "untested, unsteady" President dealing with nuclear bombs, was pressed into service after having worked so effectively in Illinois. Mondale, in another ad, stood up for the Chrysler bailout and protectionism: "I'm not a sucker." Then an anonymous but symbolic endorsee, a heavy-set, bearded worker wearing a baseball cap, said: "Fritz Mondale . . . he doesn't quit on you." "The man in the street, the red phone, Chrysler—exactly the right package," says Jim Johnson. "It went to the basics: Mondale fighting for your economic future; the leadership question; and the red phone raising the stakes. Superb."

MORE THAN three years ago, in February 1981, Johnson sent his first campaign memo to Mondale. He emphasized that the candidate must "renew and refurbish yourself substantively, so you can articulate new ideas, outline new approaches, provide a vision of the future." On November 8, 1981, an article entitled "The Re-education of Walter Mondale" appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*. In it, the author, Walter Mondale, observed that his recent Washington experience had made him "deeply troubled by the way this country's political leaders are forced to live off their intellectual capital, with little hope of adding to it." What was needed, he wrote, was "new ideas." He didn't offer any specific details, just the idea of "new ideas." During his quest, he discovered industrial policy. Among other thinkers, he discovered Robert B. Reich, a professor of government and business at Harvard University (and a TNR contributing editor). After reading Reich's book, *The Next American Frontier* in manuscript, Mondale said to his wife: "This should do it for the Democrats in 1984." Here was the beef. Reich describes an American economy that is being inexorably changed through the extension of the international marketplace and the rapid spread of new technologies. American decline can only be stemmed through constant adjustment, by staying on the cutting edge of the future. The threat Reich sees is "preservationism"—an attempt to shield the economy from the inevitable changes. Mondale avidly courted Reich, inviting him to private political meetings and telephoning him for advice. Reich's version of industrial policy seemed to fulfill his search for "new ideas."

Mondale, however, was not the sole explorer in this realm. Gary Hart, too, was looking for "new ideas." And he came across industrial policy and its prophets, including Reich, more than a year before Mondale. The differences between the two politicians' approaches was evident even then. Hart appeared early on to be enamored with high technology, whereas Mondale seemed to be seeking solutions to the dire condition of smokestack industries.

The instant Mondale lost the New Hampshire primary to Hart, he began attacking the Coloradan's "new ideas" as "tinsel" and "hype." Mondale turned for succor to his allies in the A.F.L.-C.I.O., who possibly had more to lose, if less to gain, from his race than even he did. Though he still favored industrial policy, it was overshadowed by his protectionist rhetoric: his position was consistent with organized labor's leadership. Not until he arrived in Pennsylvania did Mondale issue a specific industry-wide plan. His twelve-point program to revive steel was a combination of protectionism and industrial policy. Several of the points were irrelevant. (He listed fiscal and monetary policies as part of his industrial strategy, which is a confusion of categories.) And at least one point, his worker retraining plank, was lacking in any detail. ("We're considering options," said a senior Mondale aide.) Industrial policy is the one subject by which Mondale might make a claim on the theme of the future. The chief point in Reich's argument is that in an increasingly knowledge-intensive economy the retraining and education of workers becomes crucial in maintaining a company's competitive standing. Yet Mondale's plan, dictated partly by political exigencies as well as belief, diverged fundamentally from the "new ideas" he most avidly embraced. "Trade protectionism and bailouts," says Reich, "accomplish little but preserve the status quo." Moreover, reorganizing a firm like Chrysler differs essentially from reorganizing an entire industry. By restructuring an industry the underlying problems may be addressed. Restructuring a single company, however, may have a perverse effect on the industry and, in any case, may be a superficial remedy. This point has been taken up by Hart, who has repeatedly said: "Protectionism, ad hoc bailouts, government handouts, and Band-Aids aren't going to save the steel industry."

IN PENNSYLVANIA Hart talked at length about his industrial strategy, which in effect was an effort to dramatize the arguments made in Reich's book. When Mondale spoke to workers his words were instantly grasped; they were reassuring and familiar. Hart, however, was theoretical. He was discussing something that hadn't existed. He pointed to no practical example. The Chrysler metaphor gave Mondale a concreteness that Hart lacked. Also, Hart's position wasn't the same as it had been just a few years earlier. In 1979, when voting against the Chrysler bailout, he spoke of the "freedom to fail." He had since moved to a far more complex, inaccessible position, especially to those who had never heard it before: that basic industries could be restructured through government intervention and resurrected through the introduction of new technologies; that "paper entrepreneurialism," unproductive corporate mergers and acquisitions, must be discouraged; workers must be retrained; and the nation's roads, bridges, and sewers be rebuilt. He tried to tell working-class people that change could be secure, that the future could be just. But they weren't sure. And Mondale sounded very certain.



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Within the Hart campaign, a debate raged about negative advertising. Three nasty spots aimed at Mondale's jugular—his flip-flops, among other things—were killed by Hart himself. Almost two-thirds of the Pennsylvania media buy consisted of a sunny biographical ad that portrayed him as the "son of farming and working parents." He stumped the state emphasizing that he wasn't anti-labor, declaring that his "independence" meant he would act in the "national interest." In industrial Wilkes-Barre and Scranton, he campaigned in an old-fashioned train, drawn by a gigantic black locomotive, which billowed clouds of trailing white smoke. Hart spoke, in a scratchy voice, from the rear of the train, draped with red, white, and blue bunting and flags. New leadership, he said, meant modernizing factories. Then, he tossed red roses to the crowd: bread and roses.

In Pennsylvania, Mondale's industrial populism was challenged by Hart's postindustrial populism. Just as Mondale wants to restore the New Deal coalition, Hart wants to renew the economy that supported its constituencies. Chrysler is the economic support of his social vision. At the Wheeling-Pittsburgh plant, he said: "You need a President who knows who sent him there." Hart, in the meantime, openly eschewed the traditional politics of obligation and reward. Though both candidates forwarded their industrial program, their campaign tactics often thwarted a full debate. Neither of their visions is mean, despite what they might say about each other. Mondale's, however, was something Pennsylvanians felt they knew well. They had already lived the future he offered. He won by 12 points.

Hart returned to Denver to rest and rethink. Mondale headed directly to the largest Chrysler factory in America, in Missouri, site of the next caucus.

**SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL**

Will Jackson be the Lone Ranger?

# JACKSON AND THE POLS

THE PENNSYLVANIA PRIMARY added more luster to Jesse Jackson's rainbow. Once again confronting a black leadership that preferred Walter Mondale to him, Jackson made an impressive showing—17 percent of the vote, including 72 percent of the black vote. Mayor W. Wilson Goode of Philadelphia didn't want Jackson's help in his recent election, owed him no favors, and extended none in the primary. Jackson still won 75 percent of the black vote in Philadelphia.

Jackson's apparent hold on the black vote is raising critical problems for some of the country's elected black leaders, including Andrew Young, mayor of Atlanta; Coleman Young, mayor of Detroit; and Tom Bradley, mayor of Los Angeles. Jackson has succeeded in making his candidacy a referendum about black political power. On one side are the many elected officials working through traditional channels whom Jackson accuses of playing "plantation politics"; on the other side is Jackson's movement (including some politicians such as Richard Hatcher, mayor of Gary, Indiana, and Dutch Morial, mayor of New Orleans), which rides the emotional tide for Jackson in the black community. Blacks have followed Jackson in record numbers, although against Jackson's challenge, Coleman Young and Birmingham mayor Richard Arrington did manage to hold their black constituencies—barely.

With a campaign long on inspiration and short on money, Jackson has relied on the strength of black America's strongest institution—the church—to buck his opponents and run over them. Some black leaders fear that Jackson will do no service to blacks by acting as a power broker at the Democratic convention in San Francisco. But by objecting to Jackson, they run the risk of estranging their own black supporters. Will they be punished for not being "black enough" to support Jackson? Because of this ambivalence, it is becoming increasingly difficult to elicit from elected blacks a candid analysis of Jackson. There is a black code of ethics similar to the Republicans' Eleventh Commandment of speaking no evil against their brethren. Annette Samuels, press secretary to Marion Barry, the mayor of Washington, D.C. and a staunch Jackson supporter, notes the fine distinction between not endorsing Jackson and opposing him. "Andy Young is not criticizing Jesse; Tom Bradley endorsed Mondale and went back to California and kept quiet about it. I believe many black leaders themselves who didn't endorse Jesse only did so to keep their local bases together. But they are pulling the lever for him, because it is hard to be black and not vote for Jesse."

THE MOST vocal of Jackson's critics can be found in the so-called Atlanta Connection—Andrew Young, state senator Julian Bond, city councilman John Lewis, and the family of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This influential group supported Jimmy Carter early in his 1976 Presidential race, advised about and received high-level appointments when he was elected, exerted influence on foreign and domestic policy, and remained loyal to him throughout his Presidency.

To these Atlantans, Walter Mondale's candidacy promises a continuation of that easy and earned White House access, of the Carter Administration's emphasis on human rights, and its support for social programs. (Furthermore, the King family resents the media's selection of Jackson as Dr. King's heir.) Bond calls Jackson a "spoiler," saying, "In Illinois, Georgia, and New York, the Jackson campaign threatened to pull black voters out of the nominating process so that white Democrats could choose the nominee without any assistance from black Democrats. That is a real negative. It is a pretty sure bet that the blacks now voting for Jesse would be voting for Mondale had Jackson not



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entered the race. Had Jesse received a larger vote in Georgia, Mondale would very easily have lost. There is still danger that Jackson may arrive at the convention with too few delegates to influence the actual nomination, but enough to have harmed the next most liberal candidate."

Coleman Young, who carried the black Detroit vote for Mondale, insists (through his press secretary) that votes for Jackson are wasted. Jackson "doesn't have a snowball's chance in hell of winning," Young says, warning that now "is not the time for ego trips." The bad blood between Young and Jackson goes back more than a decade. In 1973 an aide to the mayor said he overheard Jackson tell Young he would endorse Young in return for $70,000; Young left the room in anger. In addition, Young suspects that after the San Francisco convention, Jackson might call for a third party, as he did at the National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, in 1972. "That's a political belief on his part. I think it is suicidal. I think it's marching black people off a separate cliff. At a time when racism is rising, it is a very unwise thing to allow yourself to be isolated. And that's what lining up with Jesse does."

But black politicians' principal objection to Jackson is that he may assume the role of a political Lone Ranger, riding into San Francisco in August to single-handedly save the day. They want to block Jackson's emergence as the sole black power broker at the Democratic convention. John Lewis says drily, "That's what I thought the civil rights movement did: move politics out of the smoke-filled back rooms to open participation." Even though Jackson carried the black vote in the Alabama primary, state representative Alvin Holmes, co-chair of the Alabama Black Caucus echoed the sentiments of many Jackson detractors. "Black folks in America don't just want one black broker. We want Andy, Coretta [King], Aaron Henry [state representative from Mississippi], and many, many others. No one will broker black Alabamians but black Alabamians. If we wanted a black spokesman, we would choose someone like Joseph Lowery, head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who has really paid his dues." Holmes counters the claim that it is heresy not to support a black candidate with the reminder that in 1972 Jackson did not support Shirley Chisholm.

PRIVATELY, black leaders say an incident at the 1980 convention confirms their suspicions about Jackson's motives. Angry black convention delegates were threatening the Carter campaign with a walkout. With Jackson negotiating between the two sides, there was a surprising turn of events. The angry delegates saw their demand to meet with Carter ignored. Later, Jackson appeared at Carter's side at the end of the convention.

Joe Madison, director of voter registration for the N.A.A.C.P., argues that no other ethnic group has allowed one man to emerge as its single spokesman. He says he resents the media's persistent attempts to reserve that role for Jackson. "If the Democratic Party thinks all they have to do is negotiate with Jesse Jackson as the sole black leader, they are making a serious mistake," he thunders. Madison says that one of the reasons funds for getting out the vote are so unusually sparse this election season is because of the idea that Jackson is doing so much of the voter registration. He doesn't blame Jackson, but he does say, "White America only wants to deal with one black, which is insulting and unacceptable."

Jackson shows every indication of arriving in San Francisco with more than double the 152 delegates Chisholm collected in 1972. He is winning the vast majority of the black vote, and he is gaining increasing support among the young, Hispanics, and other "locked out Americans": the poor, women, peace advocates, the homeless. In New York Jackson won 33 percent of the Hispanic vote. In a brokered convention, this bloc of delegates could play an important role in picking a compromise candidate, or in exerting pressure on the writing of the party platform.

However, other black leaders are now beginning to devise ways to ensure that they will be able to work with Jackson at the convention. Lowery and others have drafted a People's Platform calling for integrated slates in local races, voting rights enforcement, and a foreign policy that includes assistance to the Third World and ostracizes South Africa. Chicago's Mayor Harold Washington, who expressed "preference" for Jackson but did not endorse him, won thirty-five delegates in the Illinois primary. Although Jackson and Washington are not far apart politically, the thirty-five delegates will go to the convention committed to Washington, not Jackson.

IT IS testimony to Jackson's strength that black leaders warn about too much being made of their feuding. Prudent politics, they say, dictate that blacks cover all their political bases by supporting different Presidential candidates. For example, Bond cites the fact that he supported Representative Morris Udall in the 1976 Democratic campaign, while his Georgia colleagues went for Carter. Madison says, probably correctly, "On the main issue of dumping Ronald Reagan there is no division. The black community is unified." But none of that changes the emerging reality that those black leaders who are not for Jackson may pay a political price. C. Delores Tucker, a Democratic National Committee official, says, "Blacks are bewildered that the same politicians they brought to power and [who] fought against the 'can't win' mentality are using that same story as justification for not voting for a black man. There is a definite feeling of betrayal."

Robert Clark, Mississippi's first black state senator since Reconstruction, who is vying for a Congressional seat, says he found it was political suicide to work against Jackson in that state's March 19 caucuses, although it would have been equally dangerous to publicly endorse him, since he needs the white vote. "I stayed uncommitted and just talked about what a great guy Jackson was," he said. Geraldine Thompson, executive director of the Voter Education Project, a major force in southern black mobilization for the last two decades, grudgingly admits that Jackson is the key to a large black turnout in November. "I would like



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to say it won't happen, but blacks will be looking to Jesse for leadership."

Jackson indisputably is bringing a whole new generation of voters into the Democratic Party. In Florida, and in Georgia, 20 percent of the blacks who voted in the primary had registered within the last six months. After New York and Philadelphia, estimates that Jackson's campaign could bring three million new black voters into the Democratic column seems less and less farfetched. His candidacy has raised issues of concern to blacks, such as voting rights, South Africa, and rights for Haitian immigrants, that otherwise had been ignored or neglected. (Aside from the political benefits, black parents are saying again and again that the sight of an articulate black man running for President instills a new sense of pride in their children and gives them another kind of hero besides Magic Johnson and Mr. T.) In a recent seminar on voter registration at the Joint Center for Political Studies in Washington, the conventional wisdom among observers of black politics was that Jackson's coattails would encourage hundreds of black candidates to run for everything from probate court to school board to state senate to U.S. Congress. Blacks are now running for mayor and president of the city council of Selma, Alabama, a city where less than twenty years ago blacks were publicly beaten with cattle prods. According to Tom Cavanaugh of the Joint Center, blacks have a good chance of winning Congressional seats in 1984 in New Jersey, New York, Louisiana, North and South Carolina, and Mississippi. And if there is no white landslide vote for Reagan in November, the black vote is the Democratic Party's not-so-secret weapon for victory. Whether black elected officials like it or not, Jackson deserves much of the credit for black political progress in 1984.

**BARBARA REYNOLDS**

Barbara Reynolds is editor of the "Inquiry" page in *U.S.A. Today*, and the author of *Jesse Jackson: the Man, the Myth, and the Movement* (Nelson Hall).

He too has ideas, and they should be examined.

# THE JACKSONIAN PERSUASION

## BY MORTON KONDRACKE

WHILE WALTER MONDALE and Gary Hart were furiously bashing each other over Central America and the lessons of Vietnam in a local television debate just before the April 3 New York primary, Jesse Jackson intervened to complain that he and his message were being ignored. "These two are attempting to neglect my presence," he said. "They are trying to make this a two-man race when it's a three-man race. I want to be tolerated. I want to be respected and heard. The issues I raise and the constituency I represent won't go away."

Jackson finished a close third in New York, only one point behind Gary Hart. Before the Pennsylvania primary last week he repeated his complaint and extended it to the media, which he accused of distorting his message by concentrating on his references to Jews as "Hymies" and on the threats made by the Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan—a close friend and important backer of Jackson's—against Milton Coleman, *The Washington Post* reporter who first reported the "Hymie" story. ("One day soon, we will punish you with death," Farrakhan warned Coleman.) After being asked nine questions about Farrakhan on NBC's "Meet the Press" last weekend, Jackson weakly disassociated himself from the threats, but not from Farrakhan himself, and he protested that "I want to talk, if I might, about industrial policies to put people back to work, or about African policy, which most of you tend to ignore, or South African oppression. I think that continuing to raise this issue, frankly, is overspending my time." He also declared that continuous questioning about Farrakhan was "a form of harassment."

Of course, it's the press's duty to inquire into a Presidential candidate's character and into the character of his key supporters. And there is no denying that Jackson's statements over several years convey a strong odor of anti-Semitism. But Jackson also has a point in complaining about the treatment he is receiving from his fellow candidates and the media. They have not been giving him the attention he deserves. Instead, they have been patronizing him, pampering him, and not taking him seriously in all his complexity, power, and potential danger.

Beyond his character flaws, Jackson is a man of eloquence, imagination, energy, and leadership ability. He has demonstrated a shrewd sense of strategy and ability to take calculated risks. He has the power to move black audiences with messages not of anger and resentment, but of hope and opportunity. He preaches the values of



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hard work, a stable family life, education, and the avoidance of drugs, teenage pregnancy, and crime. His base is not the Black Muslims, but the middle-class black Baptist churches. He is literally the pride and joy of black America, and this year he has become not only an ethnic leader, but the preeminent political spokesman of the nation's 17.6 million eligible black voters.

AS SUCH, he has become a serious force in the Democratic Party and in Presidential politics. It was originally believed he could get no more than 150 delegates overall, but before the Pennsylvania vote he had 151 already, and the conservative estimate now is that he will have 350 in San Francisco. Conceivably—though not probably—he could hold the balance of power at the Democratic convention in July. But even if he has no impact on the choice of the party's Presidential nominee, Jackson holds a heavy card: his decision whether to campaign for the Democratic ticket in November. He is not the sole factor in maximizing black turnout; resentment against Ronald Reagan is important, too. Still, if Jackson decides to sit out the election, or if he endorses the ticket lackadaisically, thousands of blacks he brought to the polls for the first time during the primary season may not return in the fall. The Democrats' main chance for victory over Reagan, possibly their only chance, is a massive turnout.

Jackson has specified the minimum price for his endorsement: a guarantee that the Democratic nominee will work to eliminate runoff primaries and other devices (annexations, at-large elections, and dual city-county registration requirements) that Jackson says are used in the South to violate the Voting Rights Act and keep blacks from holding office. Hart has promised to support Jackson's position. Mondale—who is backed by white southern party leaders fearful that black Democratic nominees for major offices will guarantee Republican victories—has not.

Jackson claims that southern voters are less racist than southern party leaders, and argues that as many as fifteen more blacks could be elected to Congress from the South if the rules were changed. He says that the fifteen, replacing "boll weevil" Democrats, would support "progressive" causes in Washington—the Equal Rights Amendment, the nuclear freeze, controls on corporations, defense spending reductions, jobs programs, and nonintervention in foreign conflicts. He does not say it, but the fifteen—plus blacks who are elected to lesser offices opened by voting rights changes—would in some sense owe their positions to Jesse Jackson.

Another key Jackson demand at the convention is likely to be the convening of yet another party rules commission to lower the threshold for winning convention delegates in primaries and effect other changes that would benefit candidates with a strongly motivated ethnic or issue-based following. Such changes presumably would increase Jackson's own power in future Presidential elections.

It remains to be seen how much emphasis Jackson will place on platform issue demands such as a call for creation of an independent Palestinian state, a ban on U.S. investment in South Africa, a 20 percent reduction in the defense budget, and large-scale expenditures for jobs and public works programs. The answer probably depends on how such issues can be used to maximize Jackson's bargaining power this year and to advance his apparent longer-term goal of becoming leader of a true "rainbow coalition" of ethnic and left-wing interest groups.

This year, there is effectively no rainbow. Even in New York, a state with a large contingent of committed left-liberals, Jackson was able to collect no more than 7 percent of the white vote. He did his best to campaign among unemployed white workers in Pennsylvania, but got only 4 percent there. Still, Jackson seems committed to putting a rainbow together eventually. In fact, many of his issues positions seem to have more relevance to elements of the rainbow—peace activists, especially—than they do to blacks.

IT IS especially in the area of what Jackson says and believes that he is not being taken seriously by his opponents and the media. In candidate debates, he is almost never asked a stinging policy question by one of his opponents. In fact, Mondale and Hart express disagreement with him so seldom—and with one another so much—that Jackson has been allowed to take the position of moderate middle man in the debates. His true stand on issues, foreign policy issues especially, is anything but moderate.

For example, though Jackson was a disciple of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he shows persistent toleration of terrorist groups around the world—even the Irish Republican Army. While campaigning in New York, Jackson stayed overnight with a couple who backs the Irish Republican cause, and at their home issued a statement calling for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. When I asked Jackson whether he condemned the I.R.A.—which commits murder and perpetrates bombings in the name of unifying Ireland, and which is vigorously denounced by the Irish government—Jackson replied: "That is not the role for me to play. . . . I would not tend to identify with violence. Violence tends to be divisive, to rupture and not to unify. But I would not confuse the tactic with the mission. I feel an identity with the mission, with the struggle of anticolonialist forces."

Jackson went on to say that he does not identify either with America's mission or with its tactics in such places as Honduras, Lebanon, and Grenada, because the United States in such places is siding with "the landed gentry" and against "the struggle for freedom." In Jesse Jackson's book, it strongly appears, violence is understandable if committed in the name of liberation, but the use of American force in the name of protecting order and democracy never is. Jackson tells audiences that he offers "not merely new ideas, but a new direction"—and he really means it. He says that all over the world America has been "on the



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wrong side of history," and he means to get us on the other side.

"What happens all the time," he told me in an interview aboard his campaign plane, "is that those who struggle for self-determination are resisted by us and we join our pals who are in power. Somoza was on the wrong side of history and the Sandinistas are on the right side of history. The Sandinistas are moving toward a democratic form of government. Having elections is the right thing for them to do. Our not recognizing them forces them into dependence on our adversaries."

When I put it to him that some revolutionaries end up oppressing their own people, as in Cuba and Nicaragua, he said, "that's probably an issue of process and development. If we have access to them in their formative years, we can use our leverage with them." What about Jimmy Carter's aid to Nicaragua and attempts to establish relations with Cuba, which the Sandinistas answered with closer ties to Moscow and Castro answered with the dumping of mental hospital and jail inmates into the United States? Jackson said, "That was a failure of communication. The negotiations were not handled skillfully enough." What about North Vietnam's turning South Vietnam into a prison camp and the Khmer Rouge's commission of genocide in Cambodia? "Unfortunate. Unfortunate. Sometimes people struggling for freedom lose their way. Sometimes the best of people do become cruel and repressive."

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Again and again, around the world, Jackson apologizes for and underplays the barbarity of left-wing revolutionaries and derides the motives of America and its allies. Although he claims that "democracy is the very highest form of political organization," he disparages the very democracy in which he lives—the American system that has made it possible for him to rise from a life of poverty and discrimination to one of affluence, adulation, and power.

He told me, for example, that Nicaragua's scheduled election will be more free and fair than this year's Democratic Party caucuses in Arkansas, Mississippi, and Michigan, where he believes party rules, vote-stealing, and union bossism robbed him of his share of delegates. Either he does not know—or want to know—that the Sandinista government is refusing to allow opposition parties to freely publish and broadcast their views and refuses to guarantee the safety of opposition politicans whose lives have been threatened by Sandinista thugs.

"Let us not forget," he says in defense of the Sandinistas, "that when we rebelled against the British, we were being oppressed but we were not against oppression. We started out with General George Washington, who kept slaves. Only the landed gentry could vote. Blacks couldn't vote; Hispanics couldn't vote. We have evolved over two hundred years into a democracy, and even now the central issue of my campaign is to protect the right to vote."

When I asked him whether it wasn't in the nature of Marxist-Leninist regimes to repress their own people and commit aggression in the name of advancing revolutionary socialism, he said, "I do not think it is inherent. If our government is in direct contact with Nicaragua, we could influence it toward democracy. To say that they are being influenced by the Soviets, or by Marx—they should be influenced by us. We are closer to them." He also thinks that Syria's Hafez Assad, who killed ten thousand of his own people at Hama, does not really mean it when he says that Jordan, Israel, and Lebanon should be part of a "Greater Syria."

It's hard to know whether Jackson's views arise from ignorance or arrogance—or both. Jackson says there is no dispute in the world that can't be settled if the United States will play the role of "great mediator." And he says, "I can negotiate with anybody." When I asked him where he gets his foreign policy ideas, he told me, "Some views come from my understanding of the Third World. I've had a Third World experience right here in America. When we started out, we were resisted. Dr. King



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was accused of being a Communist. It wasn't true."

Jackson seems to believe that the rest of the world works just like America. He tells audiences that he "grew up under apartheid" in South Carolina, although he has become a Presidential candidate by a peaceful constitutional process that does not exist in South Africa. He also tells audiences, "I know how to negotiate with a superpower. I've been negotiating with a superpower all my life." He means the United States, with which he says he negotiated for public accommodations, voting rights, and equal housing. I asked Jackson if he really believes the United States and the Soviet Union operate by the same rules. Wouldn't he be in a psychiatric prison or in internal exile if he'd tried to mount civil rights protests there? "This superpower isn't so good, either," he said. "Martin Luther King is dead. Medgar Evers is dead. Our right to vote is not fully protected even today."

Whether Jackson's ideas come to him from his own experience (besides his civil rights background, he has widely traveled in Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the Mideast) or from advisers (he says he listens to former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, Representative Ron Dellums, and former Undersecretary of State George Ball), it's clear he holds his views quite firmly and that whatever sort of coalition he leads—whether black or full rainbow—will be led far to the left of the American political mainstream and the traditional center of the Democratic Party.

There are two dangers in this. One is that black Americans will follow Jackson into a kind of Third World-oppressed-colony mentality, giving rise to the kind of nasty questions of dual loyalty put to Jackson on "Meet the Press" by Marvin Kalb of NBC—"Are you a black man first, or an American?" The second danger is that Jackson's power will drive the Democratic Party far enough to the left to consign it to permanent and deserved opposition. Both dangers require that Jackson be challenged on his policies and beliefs, by the press and by both of his opponents.

Muddling through the debt crisis.

# BACK FROM THE BRINK

## BY CHARLES R. MORRIS

ONE MORE improvisatory tour de force has forestalled a potentially devastating confrontation between the international banking system and a debtor country. Two years ago Mexico was bailed out. Last year it was Brazil's turn. This time it was Argentina's. There was the usual cobbling together of an eleventh-hour rescue package, with advances from the biggest banks; some payments from Argentina itself; and a promise of a bridge loan from the U.S. Treasury, so that Argentina could pay its most serious overdue current debts before the banks closed their first quarter books on March 31. But there was a new wrinkle as well. Part of the cash was coughed up by the biggest Latin American debtors—Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia—a kind of brotherhood of the brink. It's like watching a circus performer dangle upside down with his foot tangled in the high wire. The show is breathtaking, but the audience isn't sure if it's seeing a brilliant feat or just clumsy luck.

The big banks and the finance ministries of their home countries seem to have consciously chosen a strategy of muddling through from improvisation to improvisation. There are cleaner approaches. Free-market conservatives like the editors of *The Wall Street Journal* would simply write down or write off the debt, let bank stockholders and executives take the loss, and soldier on—sadder, smarter, and much leaner. Neosyndicalists like Felix Rohatyn would create new international agencies or consortia to buy up the debt, stretch it out, and lower its costs, in the hope of getting world development and economic growth back on track. But for all the appeal of clean sweeps and comprehensive strategies, muddling through may be by far the wisest approach.

First, a brief sketch of how the system muddled *into* the problem. In the early 1970s, the world's biggest banks, following on the heels of their multinational customers and led by the Americans, aggressively expanded their operations throughout the world, looking for new lending outlets. Then came the oil price shocks of 1973, and bank portfolios exploded. Until the Iranian crisis in 1979, big American and European banks effectively cushioned the higher costs by expanding the available supply of dollars faster than the OPEC countries increased the price of oil. But as they preened themselves for so efficiently "recycling the petrodollars," the bankers did not realize what

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an engine of inflation they were creating. Assume the United States paid a billion dollars to the Arab sheiks for oil. The Arabs would deposit it in the so-called Eurobanks—banks doing business in dollars overseas. South Korea, or Brazil, or the Philippines, would appear promptly at the Eurobank lending window, borrow the billion, and pay it to the Arabs for more oil. The Arabs would now have $2 *billion* on deposit, which the banks would re-lend once again, and so on almost ad infinitum.

The bankers had discovered the "airplane-seat theory" of lending: it always pays to fill the last seat on an airplane, no matter how low the fare. With huge Eurodeposits flowing in, the bankers had to lend them back out, at almost any price. By the end of the decade, 30 to 40 percent of most major banks' earnings was coming from foreign lending, much of it to sovereign entities. The debt of developing countries jumped from perhaps $200 billion in 1978 to more than $700 billion in 1982.

WITH HINDSIGHT, of course, it's easy to excoriate the bankers. But until the lending got out of control after 1979, the rapid growth in countries like Brazil and South Korea was the success story of the era. The 7.3 percent annual real world growth rate from 1960 to 1980 was the fastest in history. Brazil is the paradigmatic case. Some twenty years ago, it was a typical, achingly poor, Third World country, whose economy depended almost entirely on commodity exports like coffee. By 1980 more than half its exports were of manufactured goods. It had become a major player in the American steel and small-airplane markets and had enjoyed two decades of real growth rivaling that of the new Asian economic superstars.

The current crisis came about, in other words, as all complicated crises do: through a mixture of sensible policies carried to excess and sheer stupidity, of shortsighted greed and good intentions gone awry. A careful sorting through of the responsibilities and the blame will be the work of a decade. The more important question for the moment is: Where do we go from here? More specifically, does it make sense for the United States Treasury to ante up $300 million of the public's money so the big banks' profit statements will make it look as if Argentina is paying its bills on time?

At a superficial level, bank profits were all that were at stake in the first quarter standoff with Argentina. If an arrangement to pay off some $500 million in interest arrears had not been worked out by March 31, the banks could not have included the interest in their first-quarter statements. U.S. banking regulations say that banks can count interest due but not paid as earned income so long as it is not more than ninety days behind. The loss of earnings resulting from Argentina's failure to pay would have been significant but not disastrous.

What Treasury Secretary Donald Regan really feared were the consequences of a confrontation that could get out of control. Argentina's total debt is about $43 billion, of which some $25 billion is held by more than three hundred banks throughout the world, and the rest by government or official lending agencies. As much as $13 billion of it is due in 1984. There is a genuine possibility—although the chances must still be considered small—that Argentina will decide simply to repudiate the debt.

The International Monetary Fund will require Argentina's new moderate leader, Raúl Alfonsín to submit to austerity measures before the banks will roll over the maturing debt. The Economics Minister, Bernardo Grinspun, has already made it clear that he is not prepared to dig very deeply into his painfully rebuilt foreign exchange reserves to service past debt. In the last several months, powerful church leaders have joined union spokesmen and legislators in speaking out in favor of repudiation.

Argentina, of all the big-debtor nations, is the one that could just plausibly make repudiation stick. Unlike Brazil, it is self-sufficient in energy; and unlike Mexico, it is more than self-sufficient in food. It *could* conceivably go it alone. Nor would repudiation shut the country out completely from world trade. The Soviet Union, for one, would almost certainly be willing to keep on paying gold for Argentine grain, and there will always be traders willing to take gold in payment for whatever essential imports Argentina may need. It is not at all clear, in other words, that the adjustments required after debt repudiation will be any more painful than those that will be required in any case as a condition of continued financing by the banks and the I.M.F.

If Argentina clearly repudiated the debt, the banks would have to write off their loans as losses. It would make little difference whether the loans had been made to the government or to solvent private companies; private companies would not be able to pay their foreign debts if the central bank would not release the necessary foreign exchange.

The debt write-off would almost certainly cause an immense worldwide credit contraction. When a loan becomes a bad debt, a bank must make an equivalent adjustment in its loan loss reserves, built up from retained earnings, or from its paid-in equity, the two basic components of a bank's so-called primary capital. Writing off the Argentine loans would mean a substantial capital loss (even though there would be some recoveries from seizing Argentine assets abroad and forcing the multinational parents of defaulting Argentine subsidiaries to pay up). American banks, for example, are required to maintain $1 in primary capital for every $20 in loans outstanding. Because bankers typically live as close to that ratio as they can, they would have to reduce their lending by some twenty times the capital loss.

NO ONE believes it would stop there. A breakdown in Argentina would require bankers to write down—in effect, partially to write off—all the loans made to countries with similar problems. Some of those countries could easily be forced into repudiation as a consequence, even if finance ministers were initially willing to resist the social clamor within their own countries to follow the Argentina



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example. Each of the improvisatory bailouts of recent years has required the cooperation of hundreds of banks. With the smaller banks demanding payment as they run for cover, the house of cards could begin to collapse.

Even without further repudiations, the consequences would be severe. The writing down of developing country debt would require a further decrease in lending in something like the 20-to-1 ratio. Bank stocks would be decimated, making it almost impossible to raise new funds for credit extensions. The price of bank C.D.s and other funding instruments would drop as large depositors fled to the safety of gold bars. International financing for world trade would virtually dry up, with strong depressive effects in all the industrialized countries. Countries like France, with $60 billion in foreign debt, would suddenly look very shaky. Even with the most brilliant monetary manipulation at the Federal Reserve and other central banks, it is hard to see how the world could escape a violent recession. That is what Donald Regan meant when he spoke on March 30 of "looking over the cliff and seeing the chasm."

IF THE Regan strategy were merely deferring a bigger crisis to another day, it would be irresponsible. But muddling through just may be working. It is entirely plausible that if the big crisis can be avoided for the next few years, the system might work its way back into a sustainable balance.

The debtor countries have already taken heroic measures to make up for the years of living on borrowed funds—devaluing their currencies, restricting imports, reducing real wages (although not yet sufficiently in Argentina, the I.M.F. insists), and denying credit to all but the most essential undertakings. Between 1981 and 1983, for example, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico reduced their imports by 52 percent, 30 percent, and 66 percent respectively. All three countries succeeded in moving from positions of chronic trade deficits into substantial surpluses in 1983. All of the debtor nations are undergoing severe recessions and high unemployment as a consequence, which has worked particular hardship on the lower and middle classes. Brazil, for instance, experienced more than a 4 percent decline in economic output in 1983. Clearly, there is a point beyond which continued draconian measures in Brazil and other countries carry the risk of *sans culottes* revolutions.

Part of the costs of the adjustment are being borne in the developed countries as well—by us. By any conventional standard, domestic borrowers are paying extraordinarily high interest rates. The high rates, particularly on consumer lending, help to make up for the banks' deteriorating overseas portfolios, and allow the banks to keep the big debtors afloat. Reluctantly, the banks seem to be facing up to the fact that part of the costs of the rescheduling will also come from their own profits. Mexico won substantial interest and fee concessions as part of its rescheduling. The banks charged only one-eighth of a percentage point over their own cost of funds for the first-quarter money supplied to Argentina. (One and a half or 2 percent would be the bank's normal profit margin for a risky venture like Argentina.) Long-term rescheduling agreements at concessionary interest rates will restrict banks' financial flexibility and act as a drag on earnings for a long time to come. Bank stocks have taken a drubbing, and investors in bank stocks have probably lost money over the past several years, which is as it should be.

There may even be a certain rough justice in the way the burden of readjustment is being shared, although on a micro-scale—at the level of the shantytown *favela*, for instance—the inequities are enormous. But it seems clearly preferable to risking the cataclysm that could follow upon the cold-turkey free-marketism hawked by *The Wall Street Journal*, however admirable their adherence to principle. The muddling through strategy also has the advantage that all the parties are putting up with *some* pain, whereas Rohatyn-style syndicalism would seem to let the banks off the hook altogether—assuming that a coherent scheme could be put together. Dealing with ten or twenty sovereign entities, each with an army and a printing press for its own currency is not, after all, the same as a state takeover of New York City.

Still, there is no assurance that muddling through will work. Even the most recent Argentine deal could unravel within the month if the Argentines balk at I.M.F. conditions for further lending. Another $2 billion will be more than ninety days in arrears at the end of the second quarter, and without a comprehensive settlement, it is difficult to see how Regan could pull off yet another prestidigitating deal. Argentina has served ample notice that it will be a difficult bargainer; it is not prepared to risk its fragile new democracy and social order for the banks. Even the most ingenious feature of the first-quarter arrangement—bringing in the other Latin American debtor countries as parties to add peer pressure on the Argentines to be reasonable—could backfire. Bankers have long feared the possible consequences of an OPEC-like union of debtor countries. (See "From OPEC to ODEC," by Charles Krauthammer, TNR, November 28, 1983.)

EVEN IF the Argentines are reasonable, the pitfalls are daunting. Continued high American interest rates could force the cost of successive rollovers so high that some kind of repudiation becomes the only alternative. Or the temptation to shrink the real value of the debt with another burst of worldwide inflation—effectively taxing everyone's assets—could become too much to resist. Nor is it clear how long the industrialized countries will allow the debtor nations to expand their shares of export markets. Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldridge has already begun to invoke sanctions against the aggressive Brazilian steel industry, for example.

Muddling through the debt crisis lacks all of the virtues usually sought in important public policies. It is neither elegant nor comprehensive, neither terribly rational nor particularly equitable. And it is far from a sure bet to succeed. All there is to recommend it, perhaps, is that it is better than any other policy at hand.



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Meese was a little bit right, and a lot wrong.

# THE POLITICS OF HUNGER

## BY NICK KOTZ

ED MEESE was right. "I've heard a lot of anecdotal stuff, but I haven't heard any authoritative figures," the President's counselor told reporters who were questioning him last December about burgeoning bread lines and soup kitchens over the past two years. "Some of the allegations about hunger are purely political." The truth is that we don't know with any sort of clinical precision the extent of malnutrition in this country, nor do we know with any statistical accuracy how many children go to bed hungry at night. Moreover, the hunger issue is certainly influenced by politics—politics that oversimplify the problem and mask the difficulty of achieving solutions. Advocates for aiding the poor, as well as their conservative opponents, are obscuring the fundamental problems of who isn't getting enough to eat, and why.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE
FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The politics of hunger in America has begun to follow a predictable and historical pattern: first comes "the anecdotal stuff"—shocking stories in the papers and on TV about brain-damaged babies and mothers who skip meals so that their children may eat. Then comes the clamoring for improved food aid programs by groups ranging from the Interfaith Coalition Against Hunger to the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Then come the denials: Administration officials who dismiss the problem of hunger by pointing to the lack of hard data. Finally comes the appointment of a Presidential commission of some sort to do a study. Throughout these periodic exchanges, which occur whenever there is a serious economic crisis or dramatic changes in welfare benefits, the central issue of the debate is dodged. Speaking in February to a Congressional committee, Senator Robert Dole, a key supporter of federal food assistance programs, puts it this way: "With all this discussion of 'hunger,' we are perhaps losing sight of the root cause of the problem, which is poverty."

And this is where Meese was profoundly wrong. Despite all that we still do not know about malnutrition and hunger in this country, we have learned enough over the past two decades to acknowledge that hundreds of thousands of Americans are so short of money that they are constantly hard-pressed to obtain an adequate diet—as well as the other basic necessities. One of the more helpful contributions of President Reagan's Task Force on Food Assistance is its classification of people with food problems into three general categories: the "new poor," comprised of thousands of formerly middle-class and working-class families who have been thrown out of work by the recession and the industrial shutdown; the "traditional poor," including the permanently unemployed, single women with dependent children, and the elderly; and the "homeless," including the mentally ill, chronic alcoholics, and drug abusers. For all of these people, even soup kitchens and food stamps don't guarantee an adequate diet. (Food stamps are designed to provide 70 percent of minimum food needs for a family with little or no income. For families with more income they fill correspondingly smaller fractions of food needs.) Without food stamps and food handouts, their situation becomes more desperate. In the common-sense meaning of the term, they are surely "hungry." But their problems are so interrelated that food aid alone won't solve them.

The Reagan Task Force acknowledged a hunger problem of unknown dimensions, but insisted that it could not find evidence of "widespread undernutrition" ("the actual physiological effects of extended nutritional deprivation"), or "rampant hunger" ("the inability, even occasionally, to obtain adequate food"). It tried to separate the problem of hunger from that of poverty, but in one graphic paragraph it implicitly conceded that they are in fact inseparable:

> We cannot doubt that there is hunger in America. This is the sad truth . . . children who sometimes are sent to bed hungry because parents find it impossible to provide for them; par-

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ents, especially mothers, who sometimes forgo food so that their families may eat; the homeless, who must depend on the largesse of charity or who are forced to scavenge for food or beg; and people who do not eat properly in order that they save enough money to pay rent, utilities, and other bills.

The Task Force called for the government to conduct thorough studies of the nutritional status of the poor—a worthy undertaking that is long overdue, but one that will get us no closer to feeding the children who go to bed hungry or the homeless scavaging in garbage cans.

What we do know about malnutrition and about the money-related problems of inadequate diet should summon far more concern than the narrow, cautious conclusions of the Reagan Task Force. The problem of malnutrition in the United States is obviously not the kind of lethal starvation that kills millions in Africa and Asia, leaving in its wake such illnesses of severe nutritional deficiencies as kwashiorkor and marasmus—manifested by swollen-bellied children and skeletal adults. In America today the symptoms of malnutrition are seen in children who fall below the accepted norms for height and weight, problems that have shown up repeatedly in a variety of government and private studies. In 1983 the Department of Health and Human Services released a study, which revealed that 10 to 15 percent of infants born to migratory workers and certain other rural poor have been deprived of their full potential for physical growth by dietary deficiencies. A 1983 study at Cook County Hospital in Chicago showed a sharp increase in infants admitted for nutrition-related "failure to thrive" problems, and an abnormal number of children diagnosed as retarded in growth.

WHAT THESE statistical surveys do *not* convey adequately are the mental and physical ravages of subtle malnutrition, American-style—infants who die because their mothers lacked proper nutrition, small children who never achieve their potential mental or physical development, children who are weak and listless and can't learn at school, old people who become weak and disoriented.

As for the even more elusive question of how many people are unable to obtain adequate food, a vast amount of accumulating evidence—anecdotal and otherwise—indicates that the numbers are increasing. One measure of need, as those inquisitive reporters tried to point out to Ed Meese, has been the soaring participation since 1981 at soup kitchens and food distribution centers. The United States Conference of Mayors recently reported that during 1983 there was a 71 percent increase at emergency feeding programs in twenty cities studied. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities surveyed 181 emergency food programs around the country, and found that 80 percent served more people in 1983 than in 1982, with sixty programs reporting at least a 100 percent increase. Doctors and medical students at the Montefiore Medical Center in New York conducted a study of four hundred people eating at soup kitchens. Among the findings: the recipients spent 70 percent of their income for food; 25 percent reported that at times they are hungry and must go without food. The General Accounting Office found a sharp increase in participation as well as a new kind of participant at the twenty-eight food centers it surveyed last year—"the breed of 'new poor,' members of families, young and able-bodied with homes in the suburbs. They now find themselves without work, with unemployment and savings accounts exhausted, and with diminishing hopes of being able to continue to meet their mortgages, automobile, and other payments."

One reason, of course, for the appearance of the "new poor" at soup kitchens is the length, depth, and breadth of the current recession—which, for millions of Americans, is still going on. At the end of 1983, more than 2 million people were classified as "long-term unemployed," double the 1981 total. The number of those long out of work rises to 3.7 million when "discouraged workers" are included. Of those Americans unemployed in November 1983, almost two-thirds—a total of 5.7 million people—were not receiving unemployment benefits, compared with half that number in the 1974-75 recession. Similarly, 53 percent of those unemployed in late 1983 had "permanently" lost their jobs, compared with only 36 percent in the earlier recession.

The Reagan budget cuts in food programs, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, low-income housing, Medicaid, unemployment benefits, and other social programs have compounded the woes of the poor who come up short on both income and food. The latest census study estimated that Reagan's budget cuts cost the poor a $2 billion loss of benefits in 1982 alone. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that Reagan budget cuts, approved by Congress for fiscal years 1982-1985, will reduce real benefits (after adjustment for inflation and unemployment) by $7 billion for the food stamp program, $5.3 billion for child nutrition programs, $4.8 billion for A.F.D.C., and $2.2 billion for low-cost housing.

NEVERTHELESS, just as the focus on food aid is too narrow, so is the notion that growing poverty problems are exclusively Reagan's responsibility. Poverty rolls began climbing in 1977, four years before Reagan took office—although the sharpest increase has been in the last three years. The decline of heavy industry in the North has been underway for at least a decade. The decline of A.F.D.C. benefits represents decisions made repeatedly by most of the fifty state governments over a period of fifteen years. The latest hunger report, released in February by the Citizen's Commission on Hunger in New England, sponsored by the Harvard School of Public Health, concludes: "We find that a series of clear and conscious (government) policy decisions—some made more than a decade ago, some made within the last three years—have increased hunger in America."

The contemporary politics of hunger—followed by dramatic changes in policy—exploded in 1967 when a team of doctors, sponsored by the Field Foundation and a Senate Subcommittee on Poverty prompted by Senator Robert F.



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# 'ANECDOTAL STUFF'

Something about the food line evokes another era of distress. Perhaps it's the oversized woolen coat insulating 62-year-old Alfred Brown this wintry early March morning. Or the cigarette he puffs at, rolled from the butts of three manufactured cigarettes. But this is not the Depression; it is something both less severe and more complicated than that. The current Administration blithely reduces the problem to one of free-food recipients who aren't hungry, and homeless who are that way by choice; Messrs. Reagan and Meese could do with a walk in their own backyard—where families, elderly people, street people, and others struggle each day just to obtain the basic necessities.

Seven blocks from the White House, Lorraine Jackson, a 51-year-old ex-computer operator for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, stands in line at an emergency food pantry called Bread for the City. She asks for groceries for five. A son, a daughter, and the daughter's 7- and 19-month-old sons are at home, where shelves show a can of surplus chicken (donated by another emergency food service three days earlier), cereal (purchased with a check from the WIC program), and a half-dozen packs of powdered milk. Since Mrs. Jackson lost her job due to a "reduction in force," her family's economic life has been on a crisis curve.

With the District's biggest industry cutting back, you might call Mrs. Jackson a member of the "new poor." Seeing her unemployed and unmarried 18-year-old daughter's babies crawling on the floor, you might call her part of the now traditional culture of poverty. Or, try to forget the labels for a moment and listen. Mrs. Jackson laughs when asked about her "budget," a word that seems to imply planning. During the last two years, she says, income has come in part-time work, unemployment compensation, A.F.D.C., WIC, and food stamps. Today Mrs. Jackson says she earns about $130 every two weeks in a cleaning job at the Brookings Institution. Her daughter draws a $299 monthly A.F.D.C. check. That's it. Rent on the apartment comes to $188 per month. By using a kerosene heater and huddling in one room, the Jacksons have cut heating costs down to $50 a month.

But economizing on fuel didn't keep them from running out of food in mid-March, two weeks before the next A.F.D.C. check was due. What happened? Food stamps were terminated—mistakenly, she thinks—because of the job. There was a $100 debt from the month before. She had fewer hours of work—sprained her back. So Mrs. Jackson went to Bread for the City. Amidst hardship, she insists, "Our thoughts are, 'We're going to make it, not just exist. There's got to be a better life here.' "

On the other side of town, in their apartment, Littleton and Mary Hewlett pass around family photos from the "good times," when, Mr. Hewlett says, "we never had much but we were never without." Until ten years ago, when he retired, he worked for a Washington paving company. A few years before that, Mary Hewlett retired from a career of cooking and cleaning for well-to-do Washington families. Now they're living, sort of, on Social Security. Dinner on March 29 was potatoes and "fatback"—salt pork, 60 cents a pound. After that meal, "we were at 'E'—that means empty," says Mr. Hewlett, wheezing slightly from emphysema. But too proud to stand on a food line. "I'm poor. I don't have nothing. But I don't humble myself. I'm not constituted that way," he says.

Mary Hewlett, 84, who has had two heart operations in the past several years, sits quietly on the couch reading a Bible. Mr. Hewlett, 74, returns to a theme he would repeat often: "I worked from the time I was 14 years old until ten years ago. . . . When I've worked all these years I would like to have enough to come back in my hands so that I can buy a pack of chewing gum or a pack of cigarettes. But not a penny comes back in my hand—not one Abraham Lincoln." That's not quite true: Mr. Hewlett receives $439 a month in Social Security; his wife gets $270. Rent was $385 a month when they moved in two years ago; now it's $434. He says it's easy to explain why Social Security doesn't go far enough today: "A pound of dried beans—lima or soup beans—was 20 cents, now it's 60. The telephone was $7—we didn't make no long distance calls—and now, under ATT or C and T or whatever it is, it costs $12." How does he feel about the Reagan Administration? "Everyone's got the right to his own theory. Mr. Meese got a full stomach, so I reckon he thinks everyone got a full stomach."

No one seems to know anything about Warren E. Wooten. At a homeless shelter about a half-mile from the Capitol, he sits in a chair talking to himself. I ask Mr. Wooten why he's here. In agonizing, slurred sentences, he says he was a doctor and a general in the Army when he left in 1960 due to a "neurosis." (He later tells me that after he left the Army he was "arrested and sent to St. E's"—St. Elizabeth's Psychiatric Hospital.) Now, he says, he is a U.S. Supreme Court Justice. Mr. Wooten gets one meal a day at the shelter—and that "not fit for swine." He was receiving $1,103 a month in disability when he was living with his brother. But since his brother left town, and he was evicted from the apartment, he hasn't gotten a cent. Volunteers for the Community for Creative Non-Violence, a homeless rights group which runs the shelter, say that many of the seven hundred people they see there each day have stories like Mr. Wooten's. Most have had some history of mental problems. Food is available at churches and soup kitchens throughout Washington, but help in transporting all those people who need the food isn't.

I won't try to tell you that the Jacksons, the Hewletts, or Mr. Wooten are the hungry among this nation's 34.4 million poor people. Such a determination is not easy. But they are typical of the dozens of poor Washington families and homeless people I spoke with—who, in the words of Mr. Hewlett, are running "on 'E.' "

**J.R.**



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Kennedy, discovered pockets of hunger in the Mississippi delta, Florida migrant labor camps, San Antonio barrios, Appalachian mountain hollows, and big-city slums. They saw poor people who had no food in their cupboards and heard their plaintive cries for help. "Not only are these children receiving no food from the government, they are also getting no medical attention whatsoever," the Field Foundation doctors reported. "They are living under such primitive conditions that we found it hard to believe we were examining American children of the twentieth century."

The focus on hunger at that time did not happen by accident. After the enactment of the basic laws forbidding discrimination in 1964-65, the logical next step of the civil rights movement was to examine all the problems of poverty. As a result, the Johnson Administration launched a whole series of programs intended to eliminate poverty and create a "Great Society." By the late 1960s, however, a conservative reaction had set in. The country began to oppose the War on Poverty for its philosophy of government intervention and big spending for the poor—sentiments contributing to Democratic setbacks in the 1966 Congressional and 1968 Presidential elections. The electorate wasn't about to respond to poverty with adequate programs of welfare income support, housing, jobs, and health care, much less with a guaranteed annual income. The consensus that had formed in support of antidiscrimination laws disappeared when the issue became one of special government measures to raise income and help minorities and the poor obtain jobs. The rising costs of the war in Vietnam made it that much harder to fund those programs adequately.

IN 1967 a close-knit, bipartisan group of advocates for the poor—including foundations, churches, and civic groups (organized originally as the Citizens Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition)—joined with many members of Congress to mount a vigorous attack on hunger as the one problem to which the public might respond. They reasoned that "hunger" made a higher moral claim than any of the other problems of poverty. Federally supported housing and jobs programs could wait; but no one should go hungry in affluent America. Federal food aid programs at the time, such as free school lunches and the early food stamp program, were scandalously inadequate, designed more to help farmers get rid of surplus crops than to feed needy people. Conservatives might be persuaded to support or tolerate a more effective food stamp program, even while castigating A.F.D.C. mothers in their welfare Cadillacs.

In 1967 the advocates successfully lobbied Congress to create a Senate Select Committee on Nutrition, and in 1969 convinced the Nixon Administration to hold a special White House Conference on Nutrition, out of which came an important commitment by Nixon to better food aid programs. In the years that followed they carefully cultivated bipartisan sponsorship for each legislative initiative. Whenever the Nixon and Ford Administrations tried to slow down the growth of these programs, the advocates drew upon an army of legal service attorneys to demand in the courts that they be expanded as entitlements to the poor. A massive, nationwide grass-roots volunteer lobby for food aid was developed and sustained in church groups associated with the National Council of Churches and civic organizations such as the League of Women Voters.

Out of these efforts grew a vastly expanded array of federal food programs. Federal food assistance has increased from $1 billion in 1969 to $19 billion today—a sixfold increase in real terms. The food stamp program, with its 22 million participants, grew into the closest approximation we have to a national income-maintenance program; in addition, school food-aid programs were greatly expanded to reach 12 million poor children, special nutrition programs were initiated for 3.7 million people in vulnerable groups—the elderly, pregnant women, infants, and children.

NEVERTHELESS, the food advocates' approach was marred by territorial possessiveness and an unwillingness to confront the larger issues. At the same time that much needed improvements in the food aid programs were receiving attention, the Nixon Administration and Congress also were considering a far broader national approach to welfare with the proposed Family Assistance Plan (a limited version of guaranteed annual income) in 1969. The food aid advocates concentrated instead on protecting and strengthening the embryonic but growing national food stamp program. They reasoned that the possibility of losing this one successful initiative would be too high a price to pay for adopting a welfare reform with pitifully low initial levels of assistance. (The proposed benefits for a family of four ranged from $1,600 to $2,200 a year.)

Thus it was that the food aid advocates, so successful in accomplishing their immediate goals, may have weakened what determination there was within one Administration and Congress to attack poverty at its roots. When the Field Foundation doctors returned to the same poverty-stricken sites in 1977, they found far fewer people with inadequate food than they had seen in their first visit ten years earlier. (See "Feeding the Hungry," TNR, November 25, 1978.) What the second Field Foundation report did *not* stress, however, was the doctors' finding that other conditions of poverty—lack of employment, housing, health care—were the same or worse than they had been.

Today once again, advocates for the poor are focusing most intently and with considerable success on the hunger issue and protecting food assistance programs from the deepest Reagan budget cuts. But it is becoming increasingly clear that the hunger strategy—however essential in providing some help to the poor—is too limited in scope. The contrast between the growth of politically popular food aid programs and the contraction over many years of politically unpopular cash A.F.D.C. benefits dramatizes the underlying dilemma. While food aid has in-



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creased 600 percent since 1969, A.F.D.C. benefits in real dollars have actually *declined* somewhere between 30 and 36 percent, according to three different government studies. And even those meager benefits are still denied to two-parent families in more than half the states, and to all childless couples and individuals. Most of the "new poor" families can't qualify for A.F.D.C. A recent census study singled out the decline in A.F.D.C. benefits as contributing to the soaring poverty rate among one group within the "traditional poor" category—single parents with dependent children. The same holds for the new poor.

TAKE THE case of John and Linda Sweeney and their children, cited in the report of the Citizens' Commission on Hunger in New England. Their plight is compounded by the fact that they receive only enough food stamps to last halfway through the month. Sweeney has been laid off from a succession of low-paying factory jobs, and the family has moved repeatedly in search of work, relying on emergency shelters until they could afford an apartment. They often don't have enough money to repair the car, the refrigerator, and the faulty electric wiring, and to pay the utility bill, doctors' bills, and the rent. When food stamps run out they go to the Salvation Army, and when that allotment runs out they eat rice and ketchup. "There is a hell," said Sweeney, "And I've been there. It's when a man has a family to support, has his health, is ready to work, and there is no work to do. When he stands with empty hands and sees his children going hungry."

Can we rise above the politics of hunger?

A good place to start would be for the federal government to tackle the difficult and politically charged tasks of properly defining poverty and its various components, and of keeping track accurately of the problems of people who cannot meet their minimum needs. Almost everyone agrees that the present poverty line ($9,900 for a family of four), based primarily on a grossly inadequate 1950s definition of foods needs, bears little relation to costs and needs in the 1980s. The 1950s formula, for instance, scarcely begins to measure increased fuel and medical costs.

The food assistance programs must be strengthened so they better meet the minimum food needs of the poor. The Reagan Task Force made a series of quite modest proposals to improve the food stamp program and maintain the special nutrition program for women, infants, and children (WIC). The Reagan Administration has responded by ignoring the food stamp improvements and calling for budget cuts that would eliminate between two hundred thousand and a million participants from the WIC program. In a more generous and realistic vein, the U.S. Conference of Mayors has urged that the food stamp, WIC, and school lunch programs be expanded so that they adequately meet the food needs of all low-income people in the country. Such improvements would not be cheap—various Congressional proposals would cost an estimated $2 to $4 billion a year—but they would pay off in better health for millions of poor people.

These proposals, however, still leave unanswered the broader dilemmas of economic need—which can only be met by creating more family-supporting jobs and some kind of income-support system. Despite the budget deficits, despite the conservative political climate, advocates for social and economic justice must somehow get beyond the hunger issue to these broader solutions.

To be sure, there are some aspects of poverty, as even the most ardent advocates of social and economic justice now recognize, which seem to defy solutions: the epidemic of teenage pregnancies, rampant teenager unemployment and crime, the total lack of preparation of some for the work place, the hopeless plight of many street people. Moreover, the "political reality" may be that the country and its politicians will not support job-creating programs or a national program of income assistance, and that the best we can do is to keep Reagan from slashing any deeper into food aid benefits. But timid politicians who are nevertheless concerned about poverty in all of its manifestations should listen to the nation's governors and take heart. Testifying before Congress on the Reagan Task Force report, Governor Bruce Babbit of Arizona reemphasized the commitment of the National Governors Association to development of a "national income security policy." It should provide, he said, "for a minimum-income level related to the cost of meeting some national measure of the basic need for food, shelter, transportation, clothing, and health care." Previous efforts to enact this kind of program have been stymied by philosophical objections, high costs, and an inability to resolve fundamental equities. An income-support program which provided decent benefits would give some people who do not work higher income than others who work at low-paid jobs. Remedying this imbalance by supplementing the income of low-paid workers greatly increases costs, as do programs that make government the employer of last resort. The question of equities can only be resolved by providing decent levels of support for both the working poor and those who can't work, and by trying to create more jobs.

A SERIOUS dialogue on this kind of war on poverty has not taken place in Congress or in a Presidential campaign since 1972, when George McGovern's negative income tax plan self-destructed (he could not explain how his program would work or justify its seemingly astronomical costs) and Richard Nixon's Family Assistance Plan finally died. FAP was killed by the combined opposition of conservatives who didn't want any plan and liberals who thought its benefits too stingy. A similar effort during the Carter Administration failed because of the same deadlock. These fundamental problems remain. Conservatives like Ronald Reagan, and many members of Congress, still vehemently oppose any kind of guaranteed annual income for the poor. Food advocates and liberals still oppose any restructuring of benefits that might leave any poor people worse off than they are today.

It's time to try again. Are there any candidates of new ideas—or old ideas—with the political gumption to begin?



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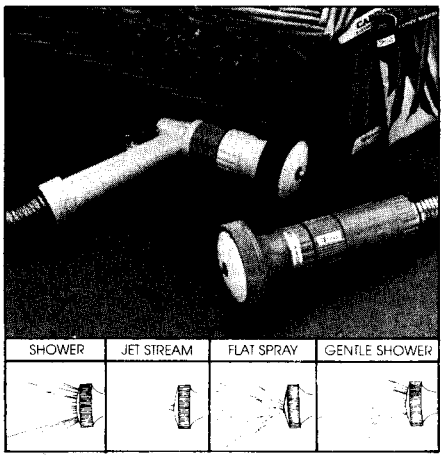


The biggest problem with most hose nozzles is getting and maintaining the desired water flow. The answer is Nozzle Five. This hose nozzle lets you set water flow to any of five positions. Use the shower setting for heavy watering or car washing, gentle shower for potted plants or window boxes, flat spray for misting foliage and the jet stream for force cleaning patios, decks and gutters. The fifth setting is a convenient stop action. Nozzle Five is made of noncorrosive plastic. We offer it in two versions: pistol grip model (left) for ever greater control over water flow for **$14.00** ($2.95) #A1046 and a standard model (right) for just **$11.00** ($1.95) #A481.

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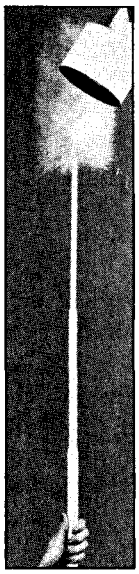
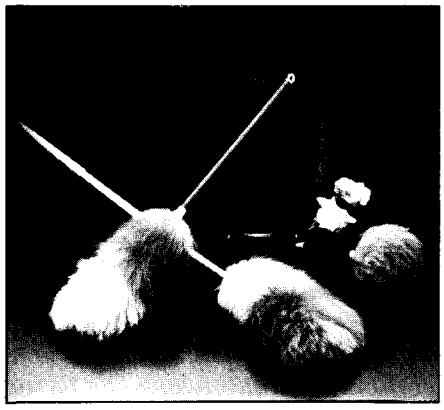


Tools for Living has introduced tens of thousands of people to the delights of lambswool dusting. Lambswool makes dust literally leap off surfaces. This magnetic attraction is just the thing for dusting bric-a-brac, china, crystal, pictures and other fragile items. Our dusters are imported from New Zealand which produces the highest quality lambswool in the world! Our all-time favorite, the standard 27″ long duster costs only **$7.00** ($1.95) #A780. Our newest find, a telescoping duster extends to more than 4 feet! This *Tools for Living exclusive* is made with an extra heavy handle, and collapses to 28″ for easy storage and costs **$12.00** ($1.95) #A1057. Buy both the standard and telescoping duster for the remarkable low price of **$19.00** ($1.95) #A1058 and we'll give you a bonus mini duster ($4.50 value) FREE!



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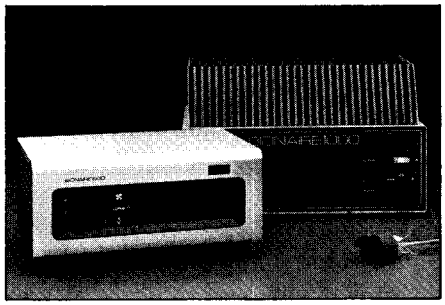
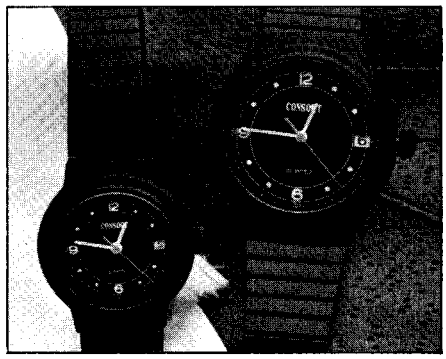
The Bionaire 500 is like moving a mountain breeze indoors. It removes 99% of all particulate pollutants from the air — goodbye to soot, dust, animal dander, pollen, cigarette smoke, smog, molds and fungi. The newly developed electret filter removes particles as small as 1/10,000 the thickness of a human hair. The Bionaire 500 cleans 45 cubic feet of air a minute, the average room three times an hour. It includes a switchable ion generator — negative ions are well-known for their presumed psychological good effects, creating a sense of well-being. A switchable fragrance dispenser allows you to add



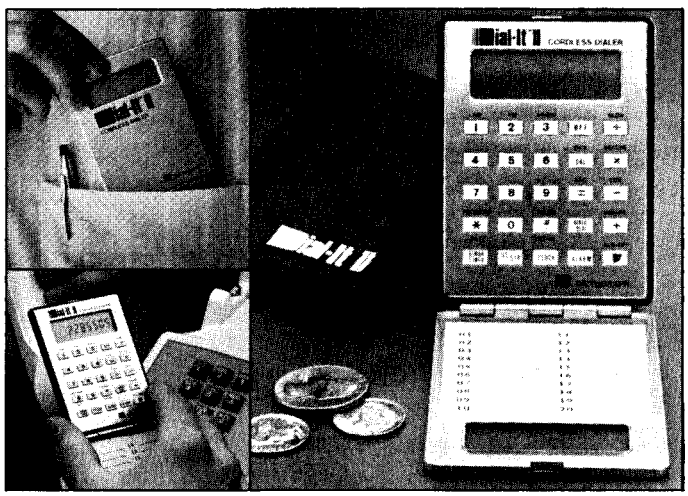
a fresh scent to the air when you wish. The Bionaire 500 measures 11″ x 7″ x 5″, uses only 45 watts energy, comes in a beautifully styled brushed aluminum case. The Bionaire 500 costs **$130.00** ($9.95) #A1070. A larger model 1000 has three speeds instead of two and cleans 118 CFM of air. This unit measures 14″ x 8″ x 8½″ with a lifetime steel housing. The Bionaire 1000 costs **$275.00** ($12.95) #A823. Both models are UL-listed and carry 1-year limited warranties.

### RACING TIME



We can't slow down time or make more of it for you, but we can certainly help you gauge it better with these beautifully designed quartz watches by Quintel. We offer men's and women's styles, both with sweep second hands, luminous dials for easy night reading, date indicator, Swiss movement and locking crown. Crystals are mineral glass, scratch resistant and virtually unbreakable. Black anodized case and adjustable band are stainless steel. No worry over an occasional dunking or shower, they're water resistant to 99 feet. Called the Consort, these watches are sophisticated enough for an evening out, relaxed enough for everyday wear. The Consort women's watch (left) #A1078 or men's (right) #A1077 costs **$58.00** ($3.95) each.

### PHONE FRIEND




This is the world's smallest multi-function portable speed dialer. It will revolutionize the way you use the telephone. Stores up to 100 32-digit numbers, each one reachable by a quick 2-digit code. Just hold the Dial-It II to the telephone mouthpiece and it places the call for you. Lets you program long-distance computer service numbers and authorization codes as automatic part of any call. Likewise with telephone credit card numbers. Allows use of computerized long-distance services from rotary-dial phones. Plus bonus built-ins: reminder and call timer, travel alarm, stop watch, calculator. At 2 oz. and 2¼″x3″ it is truly pocket-size. Perfect companion for home and office, on the road, at conventions and meetings. If the telephone is your lifeline, the Dial-It II is a lifesaver. Remarkably, only **$69.00** ($3.95) each, #A1076. 90-day warranty. Circuitry allows battery change without memory loss.

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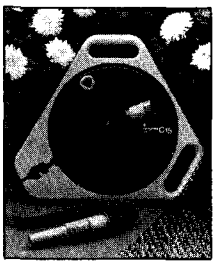

Imagine a 50′ garden hose that will not kink, weighs only a couple of pounds and winds up readily into a neat 12″ roll. Then add the convenience of no-leak snap-apart fittings to the spigot and to an adjustable nozzle. What you have is a well-engineered watering system that leaves the premises looking tidy while it relieves you forever of wrestling with recalcitrant, stiff, kinky hosing. The hose is made of vinyl-impregnated nylon fabric that will withstand pressure in excess of 150 lbs per sq. in. and winds up on a lightweight Lurans plastic carrying and storage wheel with built-in handles. This hose roll system is made by the leading West German manufacturer of lawn and garden equipment and is just being introduced to the U.S. market. **$39.00** ($4.95) #A1004.

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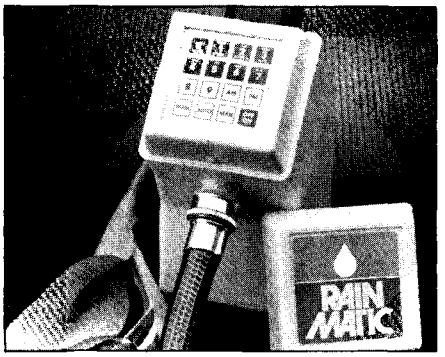


An Omaha, Nebraska man went looking for a control to turn his lawn sprinkler on and off automatically while he was away on vacation. He couldn't find anything short of installing an expensive underground system. So he invented the RainMatic computerized water control unit. It screws in between faucet and hose and allows you to program up to eight different watering periods per day for each day of the week. At each programmed interval the RainMatic turns the water on and off automatically. You've never had such freedom from lawn and garden watering chores. The RainMatic has a manual bypass, operates on 4 alkaline D-cells (not included) and costs **$59.00** ($4.95) #A1080. It is especially convenient for drip-irrigation systems. One year limited warranty.

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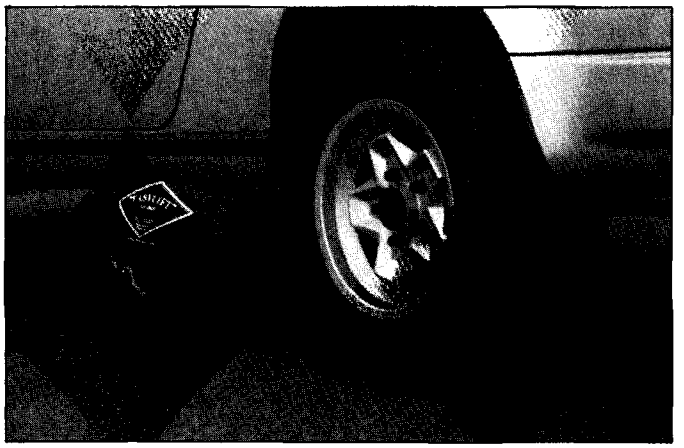
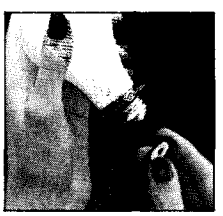


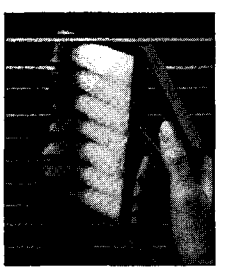
Why should *you* do the work when your car is perfectly capable of jacking *itself* up? Surprised? Don't be. It's all basic physics. Just position the Easylift Air Jack under the car, connect the hose to the end of the exhaust pipe, start the engine, and *voila*!, your car gradually rises on its own hot air. In minutes your car is off the ground ready for tire changing. The Easylift is made of PVC-coated nylon mesh with welded seams (the same construction used for giant transport bags that hold 75 tons of cement). Large 21″ diameter means car can not roll off jack. Needs only 1″ clearance to fit under vehicle. Great for getting out of ruts or jacking on ice, snow, uneven ground. Compact enough to store in spare tire well. New double locking valve allows gradual deflation. The Easylift provides 16″ of lift to a two-ton vehicle and makes it absolutely easy for anyone to quickly and safely jack up a car. Made in England, and it carries a one-year warranty and costs **$47.00** ($4.95) #A1142.

## UL LIGHT BUTTONS



They are familiar household conveniences now, the little half-wave rectifier buttons that attach to the bottom of light bulbs and extend their life up to 90 times, sparing you the trouble of bulb changing for years at a stretch while you save a bundle in bulb replacement costs. But the patented Screwge Bulb Saver is one of the first to be UL-listed, meaning it has survived nearly two years of strenuous independent laboratory testing and been certified safe for home and commercial use. Screwge Bulb Savers reduce light output so you may want to increase bulb wattage. 6 for **$13.00** ($1.95) #A1052, 12 for **$21.00** ($2.95) #A1053 and 24 for **$39.00** ($3.95) #A1054. 5-year warranty.

## 7-FINGERED BLIND CLEANER



It has taken a long time figuring out how to clean venetian blinds efficiently. Now a California designer has finally solved the problem convincingly with this blind cleaner. This tool has 7 roller fingers, 4″ long and covered with a synthetic lambswool that picks up and holds dust and dirt. Pull the trigger and the fingers spread enough to slip over the blind slats (6 mini-blind slats or 3 conventional slats). Release the trigger and the slats are held firmly between the cleaning rollers. Then move the cleaner back and forth along the blind, release and grip the next set of slats. When soiled, the rollers can be removed and washed. **$9.00** ($1.95) #787. Two for **$17.00** ($1.95) #A7872.

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*Privates on Parade*
(Orion Classics)

How desperately we need certain stories; how grateful we are when they recur. High among these nourishments for our morale is the epic of the poor boy, exceptionally bright, who by perseverance, luck, and the sacrifice of others, struggles upward out of the society in which he was born, then tells the story of his struggle—which means the story of those who are still down there because they have neither his brightness nor his luck. Two examples: *The Corn Is Green* by Emlyn Williams and *Aparajito* as filmed by Satyajit Ray from Bibhuti Banerji's novel.

I say "boy" because history has not allowed this to happen often to a girl. The latest example is again about a boy, but at least this time the film was made by a woman. *Rue cases Negres* (translated as *Black Shack Alley*) is a novel by Jose Zobel about a very poor 11-year-old black Martinique boy and the beginning of his movement upward. The film, called *Sugar Cane Alley*, was written and directed by a 28-year-old black Martinique woman named Euzhan Palcy. The very familiarity of the story enhances its loveliness in the hands of a filmmaker who understands absolutely everything about the lives she is touching.

It's 1930. Jose lives with his grandmother, who is aging and weakening but determined, in a shack in a street of shacks. Their town is a moderate riverboat trip away from the capital, Fort-de-France. Grandmother works in the cane fields, as do most of the other black people in the town, works brutally hard but is nonetheless, like others, in debt to the company store. Jose is affectionate, playful, troublesome, and extremely bright in school. The schoolmaster helps him get a scholarship to a higher school in Fort-de-France. Much excitement; then they find out that it's only a one-quarter scholarship. Grandmother is as gritty as she is weak. She insists that Jose have his chance, so the pair move to the capital and live in an auto crate in a lot on the outskirts of town while she does laundry and he goes to school. Just when his good work earns him a full scholarship, the old woman dies. Jose goes on with his schooling, resolved that some day he will tell the story of Sugar Cane Alley.

That (apparently) is what Zobel did; and Palcy has carried the work forward. Through Zobel, she gives us the fabric of life among these French-speaking blacks: the village sage, the funeral rites, the schoolmate whose white father supports his mother with whom he will not live, the squabbles and pranks and misery. It was the government of the whites that provided Jose with the education to write about this world; but that doesn't quite seem justification for the existence of that world.

Palcy herself began her career in radio and television on Martinique and made her first film there. She then went to Paris where she took degrees at the Sorbonne and at a film school. She has worked as a film editor and has made another short film. She also composes and records children's songs. Last year she made this first feature, and it establishes her in this profession.

I am not about to verify the authenticity of *Sugar Cane Alley*, but I can cite a recognition. I once spent a couple of weeks on the "other" island, Guadeloupe, and traveled from the hotel into town on the jitney, a rattletrap that held about twenty passengers, almost all of whom usually were black working people. Whenever the bus stopped and someone got on—known or unknown to the other passengers—he or she said, "Bonjour," and everyone on the bus answered. When someone got off, it was "Au 'voir," answered by all. I soon found myself joining in; otherwise I'd have felt rude. And I found myself taking that jitney more often than I really needed to.

Palcy's fundamental achievement is to infuse her film with this communal spirit. Her people are joined by common interests, pleasures, hardships. *Everything* joins them together.

I don't know how many of the cast are professional actors, but under Palcy, each of them discloses what he or she knows about the character. Obviously Palcy has a particular concern for children, and she shows it with Garry Cadenat, who is replete with delicacy and deviltry. His pipe-smoking grandmother is played by a wonderfully sweet, tough, rotund old woman named Darling Legitimus. I hope that she is in more films because I like to type her name.

Palcy and her cinematographer, Dominique Chapuis, have given the film a general tinge of sepia that suggests old photographs. Occasionally the narrative has a minor bump, even within a sequence, as if Palcy hadn't provided herself and her editor with absolutely all the footage that she needed; still, it's a competent, controlled work, an affecting restatement of a theme that needs continual restating—the possibility of possibility.

### FILMS WORTH SEEING

*L'Argent*. Robert Bresson in purest form, though with a lesser script. An adolescent's peccadillo leads to catastrophe, and in this avalanche Bresson divines the divine. (Reviewed 4/16/84)

*Biquefarre*. In 1947 there was *Farrebique*, Georges Rouquier's quasi-documentary about French farmers. Now he has made a sequel, almost as fine. (4/23/84)

*Seeing Red*. Documentary about surviving American Communists who joined in the 1930s. Moving in its accounts of initial motives, less convincing about subsequent actions. (4/2/84)

*Splash*. Breezy fantasy about a mermaid who gets legs on land so that she can chase her love to Manhattan. Sometimes forced, mostly funny. (4/9/84)

**SK**



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Peter Nichols adapted *Privates on Parade* from his London stage success of that name, and Michael Blakemore who directed the play has directed the film. If the film corresponds to the play, what did the theater audience think it was watching? (I know what I thought about the film.)

The focus is on an entertainment troupe of the British Army in Malaya during the fight against Communist guerrillas in 1948. Most of the story is about the training of the troupe in Singapore, under the guidance of a flaming theater queen, Captain Dennis, played to the hilt (if that's the apt term) by Denis Quilley. The very straight, Bible-thumping regular army major who supervises is played—superbly, of course—by John Cleese. The central gimmick concerns the efforts of a sergeant to marry off his pregnant girl friend, a member of the troupe, to an innocent young trouper/trooper by promoting an affair between them. All this, plus the rehearsals of the show, sets up a tone rather like the Terry-Thomas and Ian Carmichael farces of some twenty years ago. But then the troupe heads into the jungle to entertain soldiers in outlying stations, and they run into guerrilla attacks and treasonous plots in which, logically, all of them ought to have been killed. Most of them are spared by the dramatist's hand.

The stuff about the show is funny enough, and what we see of the show's musical numbers is good, lilting corn. But the more you enjoy the spoofing of army theatricals and English music halls, the more incongruous the bloody stuff is later, especially since author and director try to cram everything into the same parodic bag. This film is not a vaudeville of the serious like *How I Won the War*. It's a clumsy mixture that leaves the viewer a bit angry at the joking with the dreadful.

# A MAD MUSE

## Sweeney Astray: A Version From the Irish by Seamus Heaney

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 96 pp., $13.95)

It is not surprising that scholars take particular care of a literature when it is on the edge of being lost. Thus Irish scholars, in the later years of the nineteenth century, translated the remnants of a literature that only a few Irishmen could read. On the spur of those translations, Yeats wrote *The Wanderings of Oisin*, Lady Gregory published *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, and a generation of Irish writers resorted, not at all incidentally, to the readiest method of distinguishing themselves from their English rivals. Translations from the Old-Irish sagas enabled Yeats, for instance, to invoke a traditional body of myth, lore, and sentiment which he could represent, with a show of rhetorical force, as essentially Irish. The fact that it was demonstrably different from anything proposed by modern English literature was its first merit.

More recent Irish writers have gone back to the ancient Irish literature, but in a different spirit—partly in the hope of circumventing Yeats and evading his incorrigible voice. Yeats didn't speak or read Irish, so he couldn't submit himself to its literature as to something different from himself. Inevitably, the stories of Oisin, Cuchulain, the Niamh sound as if they were written by Yeats in moods now heroic, now languid. But suppose these stories could be recited by a writer fully at ease in the Irish language, in a spirit not stridently revisionist but free of Yeatsian necessity. By Frank O'Connor, as a case in point; a writer whose Irish was good enough to give him a far more direct access to the literature than anything Yeats could manage.

O'Connor showed what might be done and how a writer could, in the same breath, avoid imitating Yeats's idiosyncratic splendor. Flann O'Brien indicated, in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, that it was possible to exert a comic sense of Ireland's epic tradition, even if the precautions taken to sidestep Yeats increased the risk of colliding with Joyce. Thomas Kinsella's translation of the


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*Tain* and of the poems he gathered a few years ago in *The Dispossessed* has so commandingly freed itself from the Yeatsian mode that its independence hasn't needed to be declared.

Seamus Heaney has never been in danger of enslaving himself to Yeats, but he has taken care to avoid the occasion of that folly by putting himself under Patrick Kavanagh's protection. I don't share the general admiration with which Irish readers have read Kavanagh's poetry, but I can see why Heaney, in his early days, found it inspiring. Kavanagh's poems make the most of their origin in rural Ireland, a few acres of Monaghan as penurious as any in the island. They issue in a voice I don't find especially secure, but at least it doesn't sound like anything Lady Gregory heard in her drawing room at Coole Park. I can understand, then, why Heaney feels grateful to Kavanagh, and continues to recognize a master by surpassing him. Kavanagh's poems speak to Heaney from the vantage of rural piety and rural cunning; but Heaney also put himself to school with greater masters—Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Hardy, Hopkins, Yeats, Frost, and Eliot. In the past few years he has turned to Dante and translated some cantos of the *Divine Comedy*. So he is in no danger of yielding his rhetoric to Kavanagh's.

"SWEENEY ASTRAY" is a version—for the moment call it that, rather than a translation—of *Buile Suibhne* (Sweeney's Frenzy), an Irish poem written sometime between the years 1200 and 1500, in the period between late Middle-Irish and early Modern-Irish. The poem recites the adventures of Suibhne Geilt, son of Colman Cuar, and king—or at least lord—of Dal Araidhe, the northern half of County Antrim. His adventures began when he drove out of his lands one Ronan Finn, a priest, who was marking out a place for his church. Ronan cursed Suibhne and called upon God to afflict him with many evils. At the Battle of Magh Rath—the present Moira—Suibhne went mad, driven wild by the horrors of the battle. By Ronan's curse he was changed into a bird, and forced to live a miserable life in exile from his home, his wife, and every domestic satisfaction. In the end, he is restored to himself and reconciled to Christianity through the ministry of the priest Moling. Killed by the throw of a spear, as Ronan ordained, he receives a Christian burial.

It is clear that the lore from which the poem arose is as early as the ninth or tenth century. There are three independent manuscripts. The most important one was probably written between 1671 and 1674; another probably in 1721-1722; and the third, the earliest but not the best, in 1629. J. G. O'Keeffe, who edited and translated the poem for the Irish Texts Society in 1913, settled upon the 1671-74 one for his copy-text. It is a mixture of narrative passages in prose and lyrical sections in verse: the verse is mostly Suibhne's lament for his lost greatness, or his rueful sense of the life available to him as a bird. One lyric section of extraordinary power invokes the order of nature which has replaced, for Suibhne, the order of society and fellowship.

Much of the sentiment of the poem arises from the conflict between pagan and Christian values in early Ireland, a theme dear to many writers including Yeats, Austin Clarke, and Frank O'Connor. Heaney makes much of Sweeney's—we can call him that now—association with the north of Ireland, the west of Scotland, and in the end the south of Ireland. Tact prevents him from making anything of the association between Sweeney and himself, two poets driven to fury if not to madness by the horrors of war in the north of Ireland. Heaney emphasizes rather the significance of Sweeney as an artist, at odds with a society to the pitch of frenzy.

*Sweeney Astray* follows O'Keeffe's edition of the poem, but it omits a few transitional or repetitive passages, shortens a few more, and turns one or two prose passages into verse. Heaney has been concerned to remain true to the spirit of *Buile Suibhne* rather than to its letter. He hasn't even tried to reproduce the elaborate meters of the Irish text, or its particular reverberations. Near the beginning, for instance, a passage in prose describes Sweeney going mad at Moira. O'Keeffe's translation reads:

> . . . his weapons fell naked from his hands, so that through Ronan's curse he went, like any bird of the air, in madness and imbecility.

The Irish reads:

> *. . . rotuitset a airm urnocht asa lamhuibh co ndeachaidh la breithir Ronain ar gealtacht agus ar geinidecht amail gach n-ethaid n-aeerdha.*

Heaney's version doesn't try to retain the internal alliteration of *"ar gealtacht agus ar geinidecht"*—in madness and imbecility:

> . . . . the weapons fell from his hands
> and he levitated in a frantic cumbersome motion
> like a bird of the air.
> And Ronan's curse was fulfilled.

I don't see where Heaney has found the frantic cumbersome motion. It is neither in the Irish nor in ornithology: the next line has Sweeneybird skimming over the grasses "so lightly he never unsettled a dewdrop."

"BUILE SUIBHNE" is a difficult poem. It is my impression that Heaney found it, line by line, hard to deal with. Many of his prose passages are far prosier than the Irish. How do you translate into English a work in prose and verse which developed in some rambling fashion over several centuries of Irish expression, oral and written? Heaney has chosen to stick to the common style of his own lyric poems for his copy-text, but to include archaic words from time to time. The problem is that some crucial words in the English lack the force of the Irish. "Astray" doesn't, even in the north of Ireland, have the force of *"ar buile,"* which means frenzied. In the north, I remember, we said that someone was "astray in the head," meaning daft or simpleminded: not the same ailment. I don't know what American readers will make of such words as "rath" and "erenach," though recourse to the O.E.D. will discover "cantreds" and "scuts." Those who know John Crowe Ransom's poems will have no problem with Heaney's "thole." In the passage I've quoted, "levitated" is a respectable seventeenth-century word, though it sounds modern. But I'm not persuaded by Heaney's version of *"roclodhadh a chedfadha."* O'Keeffe gives "his senses were overcome," which is sound enough, but Heaney gives "his senses were mesmerized," which is too modern, an early nineteenth-century word coined in reference to Dr. Mesmer (1734-1815).

Heaney comes into his own eloquence when the Irish poem sets him free in ways we have known since *North* and his earlier books. When Sweeney comes back to rebuke his faithless wife Eorann, she sweet-talks, saying that she'd like to be like him, a bird, and fly away with him. I wish, she says, that we were together, and that feathers would grow on our bodies—



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*"co ttigeadh clumh ar ar ttaobh"*—"in light and darkness I would wander with you every day and night." Heaney's version warms it more:

> I wish we could fly away together,
> be rolling stones, birds of a feather;
> I'd swoop to pleasure you in flight
> and huddle close on the roost at night.

It's beautiful; though it's hard to think of rolling stones now without striking against the other Rolling Stones.

I'm sure we haven't heard the last of Heaney's Sweeney. Indeed, I gather that Heaney has been writing new poems in some relation to Sweeney. No wonder: if Yeats had Crazy Jane, Heaney is entitled to his Mad Sweeney. In a country as mad as Ireland, there is no lack of theme.

DENIS DONOGHUE

Denis Donoghue is the author most recently of *The Arts Without Mystery* (Little, Brown).

# THE FEAR OF LITERATURE

## Writing in a State of Siege: Essays on Politics & Literature by André Brink

(Summit, 256 pp., $15.95)

Among the many remarkable features of *Writing in a State of Siege*, a collection of literary essays and speeches written between 1967 and 1982, one is particularly useful to us who know South Africa only from contemporary newspapers and from the false consciousness of television. That is the author's introduction. It sketches out the unique history of the white people of the southern tip of the African continent, and sheds light on what, for most of us, is the Afrikaner paradox, the mess that this heroic race of men and women find themselves in at present. After all, they spent their three hundred years in Africa—as many as their American counterparts on this continent—repeatedly fighting for freedom.

The Afrikaners, like the Americans until 1783, were a classically oppressed people; like their transatlantic immigrant contemporaries, they mixed their sweat, and often their blood, with the soil of the land. In the course of those centuries they came to love the country, and defended it on the two classical fronts: against the overseas intruder, and against the domestic sectarian, the "loyalist," the disrupter of unity.

The bloody story began in the early part of the seventeenth century with a general uprising against the Dutch Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel, one side effect of which was the shaping of Afrikaans as the national language. It continued throughout the nineteenth century, with the British as the enemy. The story's first climax was in the Great Trek, an exodus of Afrikaners from the Cape Colony, movingly modeled on the Old Testament, but executed without visible help from heaven. It was marred also by internecine struggles, which kept putting the fragile unity in jeopardy for the rest of the century. The second climax came with the Boer War, perhaps the first universally registered modern symbol of a small nation's fight for freedom against an overwhelming foreign oppressor. The war ended in bitter defeat and was followed by efforts to anglicize the entire South African way of life, first of all by eradicating the Afrikaans language, the main token of unity. Struggle again and disunity again, a lasting resentment of the foreign power that eventually led a sizable segment of the Afrikaner population to sabotage General Smut's war effort, thus earning them, for the first time I suppose, the opprobrium of being fascists.

But at the beginning of this history, and for a considerable part of it, there was hardly any trace, even among prominent Afrikaners, of the notion that pigment, so useful for survival in hot climates, should be a sign of inferiority, or a mark of Cain. As late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, the legendary Afrikaner rebel Coenraad de Buys was married to a black wife, and a dark-skinned woman was the life-


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companion of another opponent of the British rule, Frederik Bezuidenhout, eventually shot dead by British soldiers. Little racism, then; indeed any residua of nostalgia for the "old country," any consciousness of "Europeanness," faded completely from the memory of these sunburnt farmers and were replaced by a total identification with the "Black" continent and—before the diamonds and the gold—with the continent's indigenous people.

WITH THE gold rush the sociology changed. The influx of vast masses of blacks into the teeming mining towns eventually came to be seen by the Afrikaners as a new threat. Since the threat was internal, and had an easily identifiable physiognomy, it unfortunately metamorphosed into institutionalized (as opposed to instinctual) racism. The nation's leaders gave it the seal of official policy at the precise moment when the external threat seemed to have been eliminated forever. After the election victory of the National Party in 1948, the Afrikaners, for the first time in their tortuous history, found themselves masters in their own house.

Only the house was hardly their exclusive property. There was the English-speaking minority—but they were white, and a sort of "equal but separate" development came as a natural way of life to these largely educated and apparently well-to-do people; besides, there were few objections to social mixing and intermarriage. A harder case were the Asiatics—but they represented a numerically weak segment and some, the Japanese for instance, came to be tolerated as a kind of honorary whites. That left the vast black—and not-so-black—cloud of the original Africans.

By then, I suppose, though Brink does not dwell on this, the class divisions, more often than not, began to overlap with the color lines. A powerfully explosive social mixture emerged. It was made increasingly combustible by external outrage and internal radicalization of the oppressed, with the Communists adding their little drops of gasoline to the dangerous substance. After their well-known exploits elsewhere, the Communists put justifiable fright into the souls of the burghers, and also anxiety into those who trust that there cannot be much justice without political freedom. The old, also quite justifiable, fear of disunity reemerged and assumed the form of militant anticommunism, with its tragic tendency to see a Communist in everyone who speaks up for social feeling; that is, in the man who is serious about liberty.

The dissidents came to be seen as pinkos, as disrupters of the sacred unity in the face of danger, not as people who believe that it is in the interest of that very same national concord to claim democracy for *all* citizens. "Afrikaners are so agonizingly aware what it means to be divided that dissidence in the present circumstance is viewed with . . . alarm and rage," writes Brink. Out of this "alarm and rage," the logical but ugly side effects of apartheid developed: the time-dishonored practices of censorship and a kind of "burghers democracy," an embarrassingly exact copy of the Communist police state, which is presented to the world under the rose-scented euphemism of "people's democracy."

IT IS censorship and the issues of artistic freedom that Brink's essays are mostly about. They do not dwell much on the physically inhuman aspects of apartheid—on jail deaths from the common cold that leave scars all over the deceased's body, or on the Nuremberg laws of Pretoria, which do not enforce the wearing of yellow stars only because the citizens to whom the laws apply are discernible without special accessories. Not that Brink would be insensitive to such sufferings—his novels prove that he is everything but indifferent to them—but he is a writer, and his pieces are articles of faith in the writer's mission in society. Brink believes that, in the absence of a truly free press, the writer is a rear guard of truth, not necessarily of something with a capital *T*, but of the veiled and metaphorized trickle of information about the human condition. His role in bringing about social change is indispensable—an opinion fully shared by the oppressors, otherwise they wouldn't bother to censor. Both Brink and Botha, of course, are right. The muzzling of the writers always comes in the wake of the gagging of the press, with the inevitable consequence that the only form of social change is an uprising, and the government's only solution is Jaruzelski.

But information—a simple, if perhaps complexly veiled, dispensing of the truths not to be found in the daily papers—is only one and, in the long run, less important, function of the novelist. With the characteristic tinge of a preacher that brings this man of the West close to the visionary voices of the East, Brink writes:

> By keeping alive the voice of reason and the search for meaning in a demented world [the writer] offers a safeguard to human dignity and an awareness of human values. If a writer falls silent, it becomes that much easier for society to sink back into the swamp of violence and hysteria . . . he knows only too agonizingly well that his vision may be defective, that some error may have entered into his analysis, that the meaning extrapolated from his probing may be distorted in the formulation of his findings. . . .

In the first part of this passage Brink sounds, to my ears at least, like Faulkner, perhaps the last American writer who knew that there is a dimension of mission in the writer's vocation, and who was not ashamed to let it show in his prose. The second part is a preventive defense against the gloomy voice of the ideological critic who confuses imagination with scholarly research. The concluding part of the diatribe, which follows, expresses Brink's diagnosis, which I fully share with him, of what constitutes health: " . . . but a healthy society can face this risk [i.e., the risk of artistic freedom]." A sick society, on the other hand, dreads "the vision of itself offered by an intrepid and impertinent individual."

In spite of abundant evidence of such dread in his country, perhaps because he is so well rooted in its history, Brink remains an optimist—a *rara avis* among people concerned with South Africa:

> If [the South African dilemma] *really* becomes a matter of survival, I believe Afrikaners will be prepared to adapt . . . to drastic change. . . . They have survived for 300 years because . . . they have learnt to contend with African realities.

Given my own experiences of a certain kind, I wish I could share this optimism.

But in fact even Brink, as the last essays reveal, has lately become less assured of a happy ending. Since he knows, unlike the majority of Western commentators, not only the present of his land but also its past, he sees the major threat to its future elsewhere than those who judge the unfortunate country from the safety of



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their lucky homes. The fear that makes many Afrikaners tacitly accept apartheid (and privately, I am sure, resent it)—the fear of an attack from abroad—has recently been considerably strengthened by a new external threat, more dangerous because more sophisticated and militarily powerful than the feeble efforts of the seventeenth-century Dutch governors or the nineteenth-century English imperialists. Brink is painfully aware of this most Orwellian of all neocolonialisms which, just like the early missionaries, teaches the illiterate to read only in order to be better able to manipulate their minds.

> A significant number of whites who would actively promote change are now held back for fear of another Hungary or Czechoslovakia. And many blacks in South Africa, too, may dread the simplistic exchange of one form of suppression for another. . . . The situation is complicated immeasurably by the presence of Russian and Cuban military power in Angola: a natural process of change may be inhibited by the fear that "the Russians are coming."

The explicit mentioning of my native country is not the only instance in *Writing in a State of Siege* that brought to my mind that corner of Europe where the "simplistic exchange" actually occurred when the Big Brother with the larger moustache replaced the one with the smaller moustache. Some opponents of right-wing totalitarianism grow red in the face when one brings up such similarities: when, for instance, one quotes from a rarely quoted speech of Dr. Goebbels, "Lenin Or Hitler?," which is a eulogy to the venerable introducer of institutionalized class justice whom only Faulkner, among the great American writers, had the guts to compare to the devil.

Not so Brink, who compares constantly; who in an essay entitled "The Writer in a State of Siege" (and elsewhere) invokes freely the names of Solzhenitsyn, Sinyavsky, Havel, or Gruša side by side with the sharers of their fate from Pinochet's Chile, or the colonels' Greece, and with his own friends from Africa, Jan Rabie, Etienne Leroux, Chris Barnard, Elsa Joubert, Breyten Breytenbach—a long line of them. And since the human mind is fed on associations, my mind, focused on the pages of *Writing in a State of Siege*, tirelessly traveled north, from unhappy Transvaal to the unhappy heart of Europe.

To be sure, there are differences. A black professor, Z. K. Matthew, could speak to the students of a white university and sow the seeds of doubt in the mind of a young Afrikaner called André Brink, whereas a brilliant professor of unswervingly socialist persuasion, Václav Černý, could not sow any such seeds in my mind when I was a student at Charles University in Prague; no one would dream of letting him cross the threshold of that unswervingly Stalinist institution. Similarly, it is unthinkable that the signatories of Charter 77, once charged with the crime of having signed it, could be found innocent by a Czech court—even after a trial lasting five years—as the signatories of the Freedom Charter were by a South African court.

It is unthinkable, for that matter, that a political trial in Prague could last for five years: the courts over there are constantly setting world records in quick procedure. (Their only serious rival in that respect is Khomeini.) But such differences do not indicate any difference in the toughness of the two regimes. Why? Brink himself provides an explanation: "It would be most unwise at [this] particular juncture in history, for the South African government to alienate . . . desperately needed allies by cracking down forcefully on writers." A small, nasty tyranny obviously needs allies much more urgently than the big nasty one and its colonies.

Yet even in these dissimilarities there is a nucleus of sameness. Brink's fine novel *A Dry White Season* and Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter* were "unbanned," *inter alia*, because they were found to be "so badly written as not to fool or offend anyone." Some two years ago, the spokesman for the Czechoslovak Cultural Ministry invoked similarly high aesthetic criteria for the opposite purpose when, in an interview in *The New York Times*, he explained why the recent novels by Milan Kundera had not been published in the author's homeland. As the chief arbiter of publishers' choices, he was "disappointed" in their artistic quality.

But not even the big bullies of international power play are entirely independent of the opinions of the public in the West. "Mutloatse's *Forced Landing* was unbanned," writes Brink,


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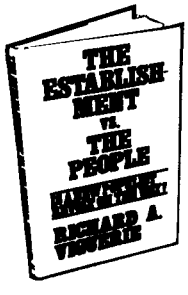


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but Mutloatse [a black writer] was, at the time, a leading figure in the Soweto branch of PEN, with invaluable international connections: on the other hand, the moving and immensely important volume of short stories *Call Me Not a Man*, by Mtutuzeli Matshoba—who does not have such international contacts—remains banned.

The well-connected Czech writer Pavel Kohout, a recipient of the Austrian State Prize for Literature, had never been jailed, although he worked very hard toward that goal; eventually he was even permitted to accept a prestigious position at the Viennese Burgtheater, and then prevented from returning home. The remarkable poet Jiří Šavrda, unconnected and prizeless, pines away in jail.

And so on. There are many—perhaps trifling—absurdities among the similarities. My name was deleted from a note of acknowledgement attached to an essay on the seventeenth-century Dutch painter Roland Savery in a scholarly journal published in Prague, in which the author, a colleague of mine at the University of Toronto, thanked me for the *ad hoc* translation of several Czech articles on the artist. Likewise, several writers banned at the moment in South Africa "may not be quoted in any manner." In Czechoslovakia, Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* had to be retranslated after the Soviet invasion, because the existing (and twice published) translation was contaminated by my authorship. When the new translator, a friend of mine, embarrassed by the commission, tried to present my retyped translation as his own, he received a rebuke and a warning that his real version would be compared word by word, not with the English original, but with my rendition of it, and should any similarities be found. . . . Whereupon my friend spent a year trying to discover a synonymous phrase for "he said" while staying faithful to Hemingway's predilection for the simplest word.

But there are also the not-so-trifling matters. In South Africa, due to the close watch on the stage, one can apparently see significant new plays only secretly in tents or abandoned warehouses, while state-subsidized theater, housed in "splendiferous buildings" equipped with the most sophisticated stage facilities, "is almost moribund," subsisting, I'd guess, on a diet of safely dead classics. In Prague, 1983 marked the one hundredth anniversary of the opening of the National Theatre. Under reconstruction for several years, the building was unveiled on that occasion, to reveal, finally, a wonderous new interior, resplendent with thousands of little red stars. However, while the theater had been opened one hundred years ago with a performance of a brand-new opera by the still living Bedřich Smetana (*Libuše*, 1881), last year the Byzantine building was reconsecrated with what must have been about the five thousandth production of an ancient operetta by J. K. Tyl, written in 1848. Václav Havel, whose name can be mentioned only in the West—as it was by Samuel Beckett in the dedication of his latest play—is produced only in what are called "living-room theaters" by groups of amateur enthusiasts who perform in private flats to an audience consisting of themselves, and sometimes joined by members of the secret police; that, however, invariably brings an intermission of indefinite duration. Kohout, while he still lived in Prague, directed *Macbeth* under such conditions, as people in the West have learnt from Tom Stoppard's *Kohout's Macbeth*.

"In a society like South Africa," says Brink, "the very threat of persecution may suggest to the writer that he is heading in the right direction." This insightful comment brings a jolly scene out of the gloom of my memories. That evening Miloš Forman, freshly of International Festival fame, was accepting his State Prize from President Novotný for the recently pardoned *Loves of a Blond*. We, the laureate's friends, waited for him in a café in downtown Prague. Eventually he arrived, but not in the manner of the heroic entrances characteristic of Soviet drama. He pushed his lovely wife Věra before him as a shield and, guarding his face with one hand, he whimpered: "Please! Don't beat me! I'm innocent!"

Mostly, however, the similarities are no fun. In Prague as in South Africa, the 1970s, a decade of intensified suppression, were marked by the absence of any significant new authors, and by a considerable number of fresh graves in the form of banned old writers, banned books, and involuntary departures into exile. But worst of all, as Brink writes, " . . . the loss of creativity, the loss of larger *dimensions* in much of the writing . . . is one of the main arguments against the deliberate separation of cultures which leads not to development,


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but to stagnation." Perhaps this "loss of larger dimensions," resulting from all kinds of separations—of the races, of writers of the same national culture by an Iron Curtain and bans, of authors who respect the censorship from those who don't—is the ultimate insult to art. Some become silent, some turn into voices calling to the desert of foreign lands where nobody understands their languages. Some continue to publish at home. But these are like the hypothetical young Sam Clemens in the hypothetically totalitarian antebellum days, who, realizing that they would never be able to put an antislavery novel across plantation censorship, shifts his accents and comes up with a hilarious satire on Huck Finn's atrocious table manners.

Hundreds of contemporary writers in societies like South Africa or Czechoslovakia produce such Huckleberries. Nat Nakasa, quoted by Brink, writes: ". . . the horrible truth [is]: most South Africans have simply never opened their eyes to . . . reality." The published writers in all kinds of Oceanias also never open—never *can* open, if they want to stay published—their eyes to the central, the burning, the all-important issues of their closely watched societies. So they embroider the eternal themes of love in the manner of eunuchs writing about sexual passion. They criticize the small imperfections of their communities in the spirit of Hašek's "mild progress within the boundaries of the Law." They enjoy the Ibsenian "smaller freedoms" of their countries that "know no freedom." Sometimes they do this with considerable technical skill and almost with the elaborateness of a Henry James. But under the syntactical mazes of James, as Graham Greene once observed, there always lurked his basic theme: the hatred of oppression in any form. That theme is taboo in the kingdoms of the kops.

JOSEF ŠKVORECKÝ

Josef Škvorecký's new novel, *The Engineer of Human Souls*, will be published by Knopf in June.

# PAIN IN THE ARRAS

## Peter Hall's Diaries: The Story of a Dramatic Battle by Peter Hall

(Harper & Row, 416 pp., $25)

At the same time that he is dictating entries into his own diaries each morning at dawn, Peter Hall—newly appointed successor to Laurence Olivier as director of the National Theatre of Great Britain—is reading the diaries of Lord Reith. "A record of egomania and paranoia," Hall observes. "He hated everybody. He used his diary as a means of letting off steam. I wonder if I'm doing the same. . . . " You bet he is. That's how he survived to tell his story. But the astonishing thing about *Peter Hall's Diaries: The Story of a Dramatic Battle* is how the author manages to preserve his humanity under conditions of unbearable stress. Openly retaliating against his enemies and detractors, he simultaneously provides a fairly candid assessment of his own failings.

I liked this man a lot more than I expected to from the uproar accompanying the English publication of his book. Hall's diaries are full of blunt characterizations and uncensored opinions, but the vituperation he attracted from friends and foes alike was aroused less by a lack of veracity than a lack of tact. Having decided to publish his book while still a relatively young man of 53, instead of from a venerable or posthumous sanctuary, he was born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Yet Hall's decision is understandable, for all its unfortunate consequences. Fleet Street had created such a malodorous image of him and his theater (a guide on a Thames pleasure boat regularly described the National on the South Bank to passengers as "a monstrosity run by a pig called Peter Hall") that it was imperative, for reasons both personal and professional, he defend himself while his heartbeat was still regular.

Judging from these diaries, virtually everybody in England wanted the National Theatre on the South Bank to fail, and many in the press, in labor, and in the theater worked hard to make that happen. Entrusted with overseeing the construction of an arrogant new building, after succeeding a man regarded as an inestimable national treasure, Hall encountered delays, overruns, union shutdowns, protests from the disabled, dissension within his own company, and hostility from the directors of smaller theaters who feared an insatiably hungry National would gobble up their subsidies. As a result, the eight years covered in these diaries often read like a protracted nervous breakdown. "How can I ever run the National Theatre and at the same time direct plays without going mad?" asks Hall in a typical passage.

> The organisation is at present small, contained, and the problems are nothing like as vast as they will be on the South Bank. And yet I am at the breaking point; very near the abyss . . . an abyss which everybody faces who manages a theatre and tries as well to be an artist.

From the very beginning, Hall is aware he is in a storm center and, fearful of

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burnout, tries to remain philosophical and understanding: "I was no longer the young revolutionary being discovered, I was the Establishment that needed attacking." But his skin remains paper thin, and no amount of self-examination can stop him from wailing choruses of the artistic director's favorite dirge, "What's-It-All-For."

Hall receives some encouragement and support, particularly from the National Theatre Board and from such loyal colleagues as Ralph Richardson and Albert Finney, but what he more usually encounters is blank enmity. Leading these hostile battalions is the press, which takes every opportunity not only to batter his productions but to assail his character. Hall is not at all reticent about admitting how badly hurt he and his associates are by the criticism.

> John [Andrews] asked me how much longer I could continue to take the punishment I was getting at the National, both physically and mentally. I said not much longer; it wasn't worth it. . . . I am in an extraordinarily emotional state. I keep losing control.

At the opening of *The Cherry Orchard* (also panned) the warmth of his company almost makes him burst into tears. When a book is published attacking the conduct of the theater, the *Evening News* runs the headline A NATIONAL DISASTER and challenges Hall's qualifications: "God I am low," he writes. "In a way it's my own confidence, my own awareness that people now regard me as some sort of freak, a failure that has been corrupted, that does all the damage."

Not all his days are like this. Hall takes satisfaction from occasional theatrical triumphs, from his knighthood and awards, and from the fact that nothing in the theater is ever as bad as it seems. Mainly he is comforted by the growth of his theatrical friends and associates. Continually accused of egomania, power madness, ruthlessness, and coldness, Hall (while hardly a model of humility) is passionately and genuinely devoted to the flowering of artistic talent. Where he can be faulted—he faults himself—is for stretching himself too thin. Obliged to support a number of failed marriages, Hall is always in financial trouble, and at the very moment he should be fully engaged in getting the National on its feet he is abroad directing films and Broadway plays, when he is not at Glyndbourne staging operas or serving as host of a TV arts program. "Maybe my hubris," he admits, "is to want to try everything." But this isn't hubris so much as an incapacity to submerge his own career drives beneath the overpowering needs of his theater, and that in turn suggests, for all his labor and suffering on behalf of the National, some missing component of ultimate commitment.

USUALLY personal and envenomed, the press criticism of Hall is just, I think, when it is directed toward the programs he designed for the Olivier, the largest theater in his three-stage complex and the one for which he bore sole responsibility. Its repertory shows a marked falling off from Hall's more adventurous work a decade earlier as leader of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Hall is conscious that he has grown more traditionalist, that "the radical questioner I was in the sixties is not what I am now," but he is not always aware that his choices may be influenced more by his new status than by any new aesthetic. Those who charge him with failing to take enough risks are right. (Hall dismisses too quickly Michael Billington's interesting statement that the most daring plays often turn out to be the most commercial.) Yet Hall himself is full of contempt for safe theater, particularly the current musicals. His evaluations of *Evita* ("inert, calculating, camp, and morally questionable"), of *A Chorus Line* ("kitsch at heart. The girl who desperately wants the job, and shouldn't get it, does of course get it. Otherwise the show would not be commercial. Bullshit really, reeking of Broadway double standards"), and of *Sweeney Todd* ("Gilbert and Sullivan out of Leonard Bernstein—no balls, New York chic") show a marked distaste for middlebrow commercialism. (Elsewhere, about the Godfathers of Broadway, he asks: "Who are the Shuberts? Well, I hardly know them and can never remember their names which is stupid; I think of them as Bernie and Bernie. But they own, or run, half the American theatre.")

About his own choices, however, he is considerably less demanding. While scourging Broadway, he expresses an unexamined admiration for such English Broadway totems as Alan Ayckbourne and Peter Shaffer. Preparing to direct *Amadeus* at the National, and later in New York under the auspices of Bernie and Bernie, he declares it "potentially one of the most remarkable plays I have ever read"—an assessment to be compared with Michael Rudman's judgment of it "as the longest record sleeve" in history. Early in the diary, Hall says his proudest achievements lay in having established a standard of speaking and understanding Shakespeare, and creating an ensemble. These, and much more, were his accomplishments at the R.S.C., not at the Olivier, where despite some brilliant individual productions he never managed to establish a distinctive style or unified company.

For Hall inherited an essentially Establishment institution from Laurence Olivier, and did little to transform it into a theater of world notice. There is vitality at the National, and it has attracted actors and directors of considerable stature, including John Gielgud, Ralph Richardson, Paul Scofield, Albert Finney, John Schlesinger, Christopher Morahan, Bill Bryden, and (before they broke with Hall) Jonathan Miller and Michael Blakemore, along with playwrights from the entire spectrum of English life—right (Tom Stoppard), left (David Hare), and center (Harold Pinter). But a great theater has to have more than a succession of hits. It requires an identity and a mission, and this the National has signally failed to achieve. Perhaps one has no right to ask such things of a bastion of British pride and tourism. Perhaps Hall followed the only realistic path, given the financial needs, nationalistic expectations, and artistic exigencies imposed on the theater from the outside. But Jonathan Miller's caustic description of the new building as a "concrete Colditz" is still its most fitting epitaph, and Hall often seems less a free artist than another P.O.W. imprisoned within its dungeons.

HALL HIMSELF seems to admit this tacitly when, in the midst of the turmoil and frustration, he is invited to the United States and asked to take over the Juilliard school. Comparing the "luxurious and handsome, well-appointed and clean" stages of the school with his own "already run-down, ill-maintained South Bank building," Hall finds himself tempted to take the job—along with the potential artistic directorship of the Vivian Beaumont at Lincoln Center. (He spells this "Vivienne" Beaumont—a portent of how he might have anglicized the entire operation.) That Hall would consider giv-



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ing up what is arguably the chief theater post in the English-speaking world in order to run an American training program, not to mention the job of wrestling with the whitest elephant outside the confines of the Ngorongoro crater, suggests a profound disaffection from his present work, which his rivals always consider a seat of enviable satisfaction. But the entire book documents the punishment Hall suffered in building his theater, which makes it an invaluable record of the costs exacted of people who try to make culture.

By far the juiciest passages in these diaries, the passages which will doubtless command the most attention, are Hall's reflections on his contemporaries. For those like me who find theatrical gossip irresistible, Peter Hall will stand as a clear-eyed source of insight and information about a horde of British celebrities, about their motives and their characters. "I'm often astonished," he writes, "how some people whose whole life is devoted to an art form which . . . is meant to encourage human beings to behave better to each other and be more humane, can personally on occasion be such shits: public moralists and private shits."

Despite this harsh conclusion and despite considerable provocation, however, Hall's judgments are rarely cruel or fundamental. Toward old associates like Peter Brook ("one of my few real friends"), he is unflaggingly loyal, and his tintypes of those amiably eccentric knights, John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson, are warm and loving. About Olivier he is guarded, largely because his predecessor, who did not participate in his appointment or apparently approve of it, behaved a little like the banished Coriolanus or the sulking Achilles, though it is understandable why a dethroned king would not be eager to cooperate with a regime that had usurped his place. Such siblings as Jonathan Miller and Michael Blakemore, reinforcing a suspicion that English directors may be the most competitive in the world, actively worked to dislodge Hall. And Kenneth Tynan, whom Hall immediately fired upon assuming the directorship, suggested to a variety of American and English newspapers that the National would be better run by a scholar or a critic.

Hall's analysis of theater, and of the plays he is directing, often assumes the status of criticism, if not of scholarship. He is incisive on the subject of Tyrone Guthrie ("a director whose technique I idolized, but whose work—because of its aridity—I finally hated"), and he is less awed than Tynan and other critics by Noel Coward ("His talent did in some sense become disconnected from reality. Too much show business camp, I suppose. You can't live off the theatre"). His discussion of *Hamlet*, of the *Oresteia*, of *The Cherry Orchard*, and of *Tamburlaine*, among the countless works he directed, are sharp and original, and he remains the final expert on the plays of his closest collaborator, Harold Pinter.

The break with Pinter, a direct result of these diaries, is therefore all the more saddening. Nothing Hall writes about his friend is ever less than affectionate and admiring, but Pinter, whose affair with Antonia Fraser was hardly a hidden subject of British journalism, apparently felt betrayed when it was mentioned by Hall. Such reticence should not be hard for Hall to understand. Open as he is about the private lives of others and his current psychological state, he always remains extremely oblique about his own domestic status—by contrast with Olivier's memoirs which are often explicit on the subject of his marital crises and sexual inadequacies. It is only in the final pages of the book that Hall admits that he has been living with another woman and that his marriage has been on the rocks. Although he prides himself on keeping his diary "professional and un-personal," Hall does not seem equally chary about invading the privacy of others.

Still, that's an issue for his colleagues to quarrel about and his readers to enjoy. The diaries unquestionably benefit from their author's free swinging, uncorseted exposures. It will be some time, I suspect, before anyone describes so movingly the dark shades of *Schadenfreude*, the pleasure in the failure of others, that color all theatrical endeavor, or so dramatically relives the constant anguish of running a large theatrical institution in an arena populated with matadors from the press and picadors from the profession. Somewhere in his chronicle, Hall quotes the last lines of Yeats's "The Fascination of What's Difficult" (verses that I, another veteran of theater wars, once cited in another prematurely published memoir). They are worth repeating here:

> My curse on plays
> That have to be set up in fifty ways,
> On the day's war with every knave and dolt,
> Theatre business, management of men.
> I swear before the dawn comes round again
> I'll find the stable and pull out the bolt.

Those in this country calling for a national theater modeled on the one the embattled Hall is still trying to run in England would do well to look upon the human ruins described in his book, and despair.

**ROBERT BRUSTEIN**

# LIFE CHOICES

## Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood by Kristin Luker

(University of California Press, 350 pp., $14.95)

It is very difficult to discuss any aspect of the abortion issue in morally neutral terms. The issue is charged with moral passion on both sides and is thus perfectly suited for the well-known American propensity to engage in political crusades on behalf of non-negotiable causes; in that, at any rate, both pro-choice and pro-life activists are legitimate inheritors of the Puritan conscience. Thoughtful observers of the current controversy, even if they cannot identify with the fervor on either side, will have to agree that the issue is indeed heavy with moral significance. The coolly analytic perspective of the social scientist at first seems singularly out of place, if not morally offensive, in such a situation. But this reaction is misguided. Precisely because of the emotional and ethical intensity of the issue, there is an almost therapeutic effect in stepping back and looking at the situation with a measure of detach-



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ment. To do so by no means negates the moral questions. Rather, it puts them in a social context and allows a fresh look.

This is why anyone concerned with this issue should welcome the publication of this excellent sociological study of the matter. Kristin Luker is a sociologist at the University of California, San Diego. In the preface she tells us that she regards the abortion issue as very important; she refuses to tell us which side she is on. One can guess, perhaps, but Luker makes the guessing less than easy. She is careful to let both sides speak their piece fully; she avoids moral judgments of her own; and she is sensitive to the ideologically charged uses of language. For example, she consistently uses the word "embryo" as against the (implicitly pro-choice) "fetus" or the (implicitly pro-life) "baby" or "unborn child."

Luker's decision to adopt the much-maligned sociological stance of value-neutrality was a wise one. It results in the best kind of contribution that sociology can make to a politically heated situation. The book can be read with profit by partisans of either side; and by clarifying the terms of the debate it may even, in some small measure, help toward an eventual compromise between the opposed camps.

Luker's study is based on standard empirical research techniques—analysis of newspaper stories and what she calls "the persuasive literature" of both sides as well as of archival materials, and interviews with both pro-choice and pro-life activists. A detailed methodological appendix testifies to Luker's scrupulous adherence to the research canons of her profession. Not to worry, then: she has a good empirical warranty for what she says.

And what is she saying? As with all good sociology, Luker's argument begins with history. She outlines the history of the debate over the moral status of the embryo, paying special attention to nineteenth-century America, where there was an earlier version of the pro-life movement (a fact that may surprise many readers). Only then does she proceed with her sociological analysis proper. This analysis does two things. First, it shows that attitudes to abortion are embedded in a much broader world view (or, more accurately, in two such world views). Second, she argues that these world views do not reside in some platonic heaven of ideas, but are linked to specific vested interests of the two groups of protagonists. Needless to say, this second point will likely offend a lot of people, but then sociologists have always been in the business of offending.

The most interesting part of the historical background is the role of doctors in the earlier anti-abortion campaign. Luker interprets this as a side product of the professionalization of medicine: here as elsewhere, doctors organized to establish their monopoly over the physical treatment of any and all human ailments. Abortion was outlawed, but at the same time doctors were placed in the position of being the only judges of whether a particular abortion may be deemed medically necessary. They were so successful in this that there ensued what Luker calls a "century of silence," during which there was very little discussion of the matter. The silence was broken in the mid-twentieth century, at a time when the professional monopoly of doctors ran into other difficulties as well. Even then the call for abortion reform came mainly from professionals, heterodox doctors among them. But only with the rise of the new feminist movement did the issue become broadly politicized. The Supreme Court decision of 1973 was, of course, a great victory for the pro-abortion forces. At the same time, and very rapidly, it galvanized a broadly based anti-abortion movement and created the present situation of head-on conflict.

THE BACKGROUND to *Rowe* v. *Wade* helps to clarify the ideological factors at work. In 1967, as a result of the earlier professionals' movement for "abortion reform," California passed a law that very broadly liberalized the availability of abortions, almost to the point of abortion on demand. Thus in 1972 the abortion rate in the state stabilized at a little over one hundred thousand a year, where it has remained ever since. But the feminists were not satisfied with this practical victory, because the decision still maintained the traditional assumption that a judgment of medical need was a prerequisite for an abortion. They insisted that abortion is a woman's inherent right. And that insistence, of course, is embedded in a much broader world view, which embraces radical new definitions of personhood, womanhood, sexuality, and social relations in general. Luker is not original, but almost certainly correct, in relating this feminist perspective to the


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increasing participation of women in the work force.

Philosophically, the core proposition of the pro-life world view is that personhood is an inborn and inalienable right and that abortion threatens this right in the most fundamental way, by making it contingent on the decisions of society. This proposition, though, is empirically linked to others—that men and women are "naturally" different, that therefore they ought to play different social roles, that the primary role for any woman should be wifehood and motherhood. And all of these propositions are rooted in a more fundamental belief in a God-given, or at any rate unalterable, moral order that cannot or should not be modified by human beings.

BY CONTRAST, the pro-choice world view, while it would in the abstract assent to the same primacy of the right to personhood (in this respect, both camps are clearly the children of the Judeo-Christian ethic), refuses to accord that right to the embryo. It further proposes that the roles of men and women are not "natural" but socially constructed, that wifehood and motherhood are only two roles among other equally important ones, that both wifehood and motherhood can (and in fact should) be freely redefined by the individuals playing them, and that such redefinition entails a liberation of women from age-old repressions. All of these propositions are in turn legitimated by a much more relativistic conception of morality. The norms that govern human actions are not God-given, not immutable, but can and must be redefined as situations change; indeed, such redefinition is in itself an important right of human beings. Not surprisingly, the number of individuals with strong religious commitments is much larger in the pro-life camp.

Sociology is a profoundly vulgarizing discipline (this is not a pejorative description, since most of human life is pretty vulgar). Sociologists are accustomed to relate moral philosophies to such pedestrian matters as work-force statistics. Luker does, too, and very instructively. Pro-life activists tend to be women whose social status depends on motherhood (a surprising number of them, one out of five, have six or more children) rather than work (63 percent do not work, and most of those who do are unmarried). Therefore they have a strong vested interest in glorifying, indeed absolutizing, motherhood. By contrast, pro-choice activists tend to be women whose social status depends on work. They have fewer children (on the average, one or two), they are much more likely to have been divorced, and almost without exception they work, most of them earning good salaries. They have a strong vested interest in glorifying their work roles over their domestic roles.

In other words, each of these two groups appears to choose that set of moral imperatives that most enhances their respective style of life. The educational and income differences between the two groups are startling: 37 percent of pro-choice activists have done some graduate work beyond the B.A. degree; by contrast, 40 percent of pro-life activists never went to college or never finished it. An amazing 94 percent of the pro-choice women work and over 50 percent of these have incomes in the top 10 percent of working women in the country. By contrast, 50 percent of the pro-life women who work earn less than $5,000 a year, and the other 50 percent earn between that and $10,000. And what is more, the incomes of the respective spouses of these two sets of women vary accordingly. No wonder, then, that the two groups have very different notions about inborn worth versus achieved worth. Each of the two moralities and world views serves as a legitimating instrument for two sociologically distinct groups of people.

For the sociologist, Luker's data shout a single word: class! Put simply, class is the single most important variable predicting an individual's attitude toward abortion. This suggests, however, a further sociological hypothesis—that the debate over abortion is part and parcel of a larger class conflict. If Luker can be faulted for anything, it is that she does not seem sufficiently clear about this. Her findings, excellent as they are in themselves, gain greater value if they are placed in a wider framework of class analysis. Thus her notion of world view is rather narrow, being limited to what people believe about matters of personal life-style (sexuality, marriage, children, and work).

But empirically these beliefs are associated with other cognitive and normative definitions of reality that can *also* be predicted on the basis of class—for example, attitudes about politics, the economy, or the environment. A sociologist will have good grounds to


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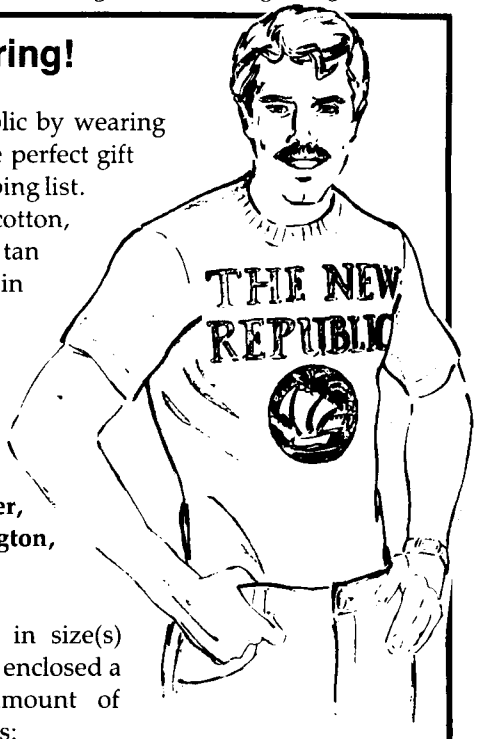


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hypothesize that pro-choice activists, when compared with pro-life activists, are more likely to vote for left-of-center candidates, to be suspicious of the military and of big business, and to be worried about the future of whales. Of course, logically (say, from the perspective of an ethnological observer from Outer Mongolia), these associations may not be compelling. Why should advocacy of abortion on demand be linked with suspicious attitudes toward the Pentagon or toward multinational corporations? Could one not be a feminist in favor of a strong national defense? And why not be pro-life and opposed to American policy in El Salvador?

LOGICALLY, of course, such combinations are possible; no doubt they do occur. Empirically, however, the likelihood is that an individual will adhere to that particular aggregate of beliefs and attitudes that has become established in his or her social milieu. Put differently, beliefs and attitudes constitute what sociologists call a class culture. Luker has demonstrated with sharp clarity that beliefs and attitudes concerning abortion—and, along with it, an entire set of personal life-style issues—have become an integral part of class culture in America.

This should really not come as a surprise. Sociologists have long known that class predicts an individual's voting patterns, religious affiliation, aesthetic taste, and sexual habits. If class predicts whether a woman is a Republican or a Democrat, an Episcopalian or a Seventh-Day Adventist, an admirer of nonobjective painters as against Norman Rockwell, and whether she prefers to make love with the lights on or in the dark—why should class not predict how she feels about abortion? To say "why not indeed," however, opens up a line of analysis that is absent from Luker's argument.

A sociological proposition: abortion has become a cultural symbol in an ongoing class conflict in American society. This implies, of course, that much broader vested interests than those described by Luker are at stake. It is not just that individuals use this issue to legitimate their personal place in society. Rather, the issue is related to the legitimation of the privileges, power, and status of entire classes. Thus abortion is a "symbolic" issue in the literal sense; it represents, it stands for, something else—and that something else is a struggle between classes. It is not the first time in history that *Kulturkampf* has thus been related to *Klassenkampf*.

Lest this sound overly Marxist, let it be quickly said that the class conflict in point has very little to do with the struggles between capitalists and proletarians that Marxists still fantasize about. It is a very different kind of class conflict, taking place *within* the "bourgeoisie" and between different "bourgeois" elites; it has nothing to do with any Marxist interpretation of contemporary society. One has a choice of interpreting this in more or less conventional categories. If one looks at the matter in the light of conventional sociology, Luker's activists are engaged in a battle between upper-middle-class and lower-middle-class world views *cum* vested interests. In that battle, one would hypothesize, the lower-middle-class activists also represent a larger working-class constituency, with very similar values and interests. The truly poor, however, rarely furnish activists. Consequently Luker cannot be blamed for the middle-class tones of the voices she records from both sides. Still, we do know about the poor and abortion from other sources. The poor have many abortions and they are morally opposed to abortion. That constitutes a poignant problem in itself.

IT LOOKS as though the present battle is yet another case of the upper-middle-class seeking to impose its norms on the rest of the population, which is fighting back as well as it can. The parallels to the Temperance movement are striking. Here, too, an elite of upper-middle-class women, allied with sundry professionals, tried to change the law in the name of "bourgeois" notions of a proper life-style. Other cases could readily be cited. The issue at hand could then also be described as one of the range (and perhaps the limits) of *embourgeoisement* in contemporary society.

A less conventional, and perhaps more precise, mode of interpretation would be in terms of what (somewhat optimistically) has been called "New Class theory." The latter phrase refers to the notion that there has been a split in the middle class, between the old "bourgeoisie" linked to business and the traditional professions on the one hand, and a new middle class of educators, communicators, and other "intellectuals" (or semi-intellectuals) on the other. The conflict here is between those who make their living by the production and distribution of material goods and services, and those whose economic base is in the production and distribution of symbolic knowledge (including, very importantly, "knowledge" about the proper "quality of life"). No matter which of the two versions of class analysis one applies, the cultural issues serve the classical function of "ideas as weapons." Each victory on the level of ideas not only represents but actually constitutes a victory in the struggle over power, privilege, and prestige.

SOCIOLOGICAL analysis is always "debunking," because it "shows up" the vulgar motives underlying this or that idealistic rhetoric. It is useful to the extent that it sobers the debate. Needless to say, sociology is in no position to arbitrate the philosophical and ethical antinomies. To say that a particular position reflects class interests is not to say whether the position is true or false, right or wrong. Modern natural science may well have its social roots in the intellectual requirements of the rising bourgeoisie; this hypothesis has no bearing on its epistemological validity. Likewise, opposition to torture may have been rooted in class-bound sensibilities of the same early bourgeoisie; if so, this would not imply that this opposition was a moral mistake. The sociologist, within the confines of this particular empirical discipline, can make neither philosophical nor ethical judgments. Yet the sobering perspective of the sociologist makes it more possible to step back from the immediate situation, to see the social forces at work—and then to return once more to the philosophical and ethical questions, most of which are, in any case, of a perennial kind. There is a (somewhat circuitous) road from statistical data to a renewed appreciation of the sorrows and the wonder of the human condition.

Luker is pessimistic about a resolution of the antagonisms of this debate. On the level of ideas, the two world views are so diametrically opposed that compromise between them is very hard to imagine. On the level of class conflict, the debate reflects vested interests that are hard and not likely to disappear anytime soon. The probable scenarios, it follows, are depressing: an ongoing series of battles, with no clear-cut victory for either side and continuing deep rifts in the fabric of society. Or, the use



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of law and political force to impose the position of one camp on the other, with a high price to be paid in terms of resentment and alienation on the losing side.

If one is concerned for the future of American society, one cannot but hope for a more benign outcome, some sort of collective *crise de conscience* that would shift the terms of the debate. All participants in the debate cherish the idea of the dignity and worth of the individual, as rooted in the religious and moral traditions of Western civilization, and as institutionalized in the American democratic experiment. All can agree on the pain and sorrow of abortion. All should be capable of understanding that this issue touches on the deepest questions about human nature and human life, on a zone of mystery that should evoke awe rather than shrill certitudes.

Is it utopian to hope that a new national consensus might not eventually emerge from a less hostile engagement with this issue? After all, it would not be the first time. Just such a new consensus emerged before on other issues—such as racial equality or the treatment of children, or the rights of the handicapped. There will always be class and cultural conflicts, but it is not inevitable that this particular issue remain as a strategic focus of these conflicts.

PETER L. BERGER

Peter L. Berger is University Professor at Boston University and co-author (with Brigitte Berger) of *The War Over the Family* (Doubleday).

# WHERE THE BOYS ARE

## Edisto
## by Padgett Powell

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 183 pp., $11.95)

## Testing the Current
## by William McPherson

(Simon & Schuster, 348 pp., $15.95)

To say that these two interesting novels are about growing up is not to say very much, although their respective authors invite us to see the young hero in each as undergoing something like a rite of passage into a new life—the "adult world" with which, over the course of the novel, he has come to terms, and taken the measure of. William McPherson's protagonist is 8 years old, and the narrator of Padgett Powell's story is near 12; both are to be admired, and are rewarded throughout the books with authorial approval. Even when they are mistaken or momentarily unknowing, no cold eye is cast on their vivid, rather fearsomely articulate hold on the people and customs of the world outside them. Quite the little monsters, a rather more satiric glance might have caused us to think. But the prevailing comic mode in which both novels are cast precludes harsh critical satire except when directed away from the protagonist.

In the case of Powell's *Edisto*, the blurb assures us that we are located in South Carolina, on "an undeveloped strip of coast between Savannah and Charleston," but although there are references to landmarks like Parris Island and Hilton Head (where the hero eventually winds up, tellingly referring to it as "old brand-new Hilton Head . . . the first solid Arab bastion and a pure squat of Hell"), its real country is the land of Style. If young Simons Manigault (pronounced Simmons) wants to tell us how his mother's Negro maid "Theenie" (and "Negro maid" is the idiom, not "black employee") operates in her kitchen, he does it like this:

> And she could cook mullet brought in head down in a pickle bucket of pink fish slime and worm goo, fry them, and bounce those bones a little too, but when


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it comes to making something like a cake, which, considering its components (like water and flour and other powders), can't be too foul, at least not like mullet in a bucket sat on by a fat lady in the sun until they stopped biting—it comes to making a bakery-clean white thing like a cake and she's got to have fresh eggs, fresh real butter, sweet milk, and you can't even walk around the house while it cooks lest it fall, and she won't run the vacuum cleaner while it's in there either. She can only sit down with another Co'-Cola and a Stanback powder to virtually pray for it, and then it's out, it will have to cool, and nine times out of ten, before you can touch it, she has grafted to it wax paper set into the hot buttery sugary crust of the cake and welded there by a fusion of wax and cake, and that cake you could throw in the ocean and it would float like a crab-pot marker for years. . . .

I break off the quotation, but Powell keeps right on improvising, endowing Simons with an idiom in which everything is transfigured, as thoroughly "made" as that cake and frequently as tasty.

At times the young narrator thinks about language: "So, it foundly occurred to me plenty was happening. That's a childhood thing I said, 'foundly' for 'finally.' The best language is then." Plenty happens in Simons's language, enough to make any serious interest in story—in what happens next—rather minimal. And here I think that in comparison with *A Clockwork Orange* or *The Catcher in the Rye*, novels run by other verbally well-endowed first-person performers, Powell's feels episodic rather than cumulative. Yet the episodes are quite unusual ones, like encountering two "Negro ladies" fishing for mullet and enlivening the scene with their responses to Simons's questions: " 'When they sposed to start biting?' I said. 'They might not be sposed to,' one of them said, laughing. 'Did they bite yesterday?' '*Might* did.' " Or there is this splendid description of the "Federal Oral History Program," in town to observe the natives weaving baskets for tourists:

> But when the federal oral boys rolled up looking like Fellini with zits and surrounded them with a TV studio—brushed aluminum and diffusion parasols, and scared them with the full brunt of the Modern Age, they took it, staring into the indigo zoom. Great big glass eye looking like a gasoline spill on a black tar road.

The novel's life is also geographical, topological, socioeconomic (the black-white interactions are fine indeed); but, as with matters of story and character, they pale before the verbal invention exhibited in every sentence and phrase—sometimes archly, or over-pleased with itself, but in the main a lot of fun. One thinks of Salinger again when one is brought up, through what sounds like a deep meditative note, to the pervasive moral attitude toward language and life that informs *Edisto*. Here Simons thinks about how wanting to know something is like waiting for a dream to "surface in the morning":

> which if you jump up and wonder hard you will never remember, but if you just lie there and listen to the suck-pump chop of the surf and the peppering and the palm thrashing and feel the rising glare of Atlantic heat, you can remember all the things of the night. But if you go around beating the world with questions like a reporter or federal oral history junior sociologist number-two pencil electronic keyout asshole, all the answers will go back into mystery like fiddlers into pluff mud.

We are invited to look with favor on these winning formulations and on the formulator of them, at ease with and taking pleasure in the life of his vernacular poetry.

TOMMY MCALLISTER, the center of William McPherson's novel about coming of age, goes around "beating the world with questions." By the end of the book some of the important ones have been answered; at least he is brought up close to an adult world of sexual intrigue and ugly behavior which, on the verge of entering third grade, he deals with by resolving to change his name and by telling himself he has "learned a lot of things." Early in the book we are told that Tommy "was rarely disturbed by the presence of his feelings, no matter how bad, but he was sometimes bothered by their absence. And sometimes he didn't know what his feelings were supposed to be or what they actually were." Yet I don't think a reader need be much impressed by what, eventually, Tommy knew.

In playing down the thematic interest, I would emphasize instead that this

## THE NEW REPUBLIC'S BEST BOOKS

*Following is a list of books* TNR *has recently reviewed and recommends.*

***D. W. Griffith: An American Life*** by Richard Schickel (Simon and Schuster). A comprehensive and conscientious biography—the best ever written—of the director who helped shape film as we now know it. (Reviewed 4/23/84)

***Notebooks 1960-1977*** by Athol Fugard, edited by Mary Benson (Knopf). A record of art under the rule of apartheid. (4/9/84)

***Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945-1951*** by Alan Bullock (Norton). The final years of a great English statesman. (4/9/84)

***Congress and the Common Good*** by Arthur Maass (Basic). A book that makes sense of the most complicated legislature in the world. (4/2/84)

***The Black Book of Polish Censorship*** translated and edited by Jane Leftwich Curry (Random House). An invaluable inside view of the workings of Communist censorship. (4/2/84)

***Days We Would Rather Know*** by Michael Blumenthal (Viking). The many moods of a notable new poet. (4/16/84)

***An Interrupted Life: The Diaries of Etty Hillesum, 1941-1943*** translated by Arno Pomerans, edited by J. G. Gaarlandt (Pantheon). The spiritual and sensual reflections of a young Jewish woman who died in a concentration camp. (3/26/84)

***I Wish This War Were Over*** by Diana O'Hehir (Atheneum). A first novel whose people and places are unforgettably vivid. (3/19/84)

***Hazlitt: The Mind of a Critic*** by David Bromwich (Oxford University Press). A major study of England's most restless Romantic. (3/12/84)

***The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade***, by Harvey Klehr (Basic). The last word on the American Communist movement's ties to Moscow. (3/5/84)



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portrait from life in a "privileged" family in a small industrial Wisconsin town (Tommy's father is an engineer who runs the local plant) in 1939, on the brink of World War II, is essentially a remembering of things past—like the boy falling asleep on Christmas Eve:

> The lights catching the crystals of frost in the corner of his bedroom window made it seem even colder. High against the sky he could see the orange glow from the furnaces in his father's plant. . . . Tommy snuggled farther down in his bed, watching the motes of blue light sparkle from the trees on his roof, in the frost on his window, in the silver dollar on his sill. He closed his eyes tight to see the points of light popping against his eyelids like tiny fireworks, and snapped them open to see the lights still twinkling on the trees, cold and sharp, and the reflection of the fires at the plant shimmering in the distant sky.

This may suggest both the novel's leisurely pace and its hospitable, largely un-ironic registering of sensations and events on the boy's consciousness. There are extended set-pieces, like the singing of Thanksgiving hymns at a family gathering, or the customs and ceremony of Christmas Day ("How but in custom and in ceremony/Are innocence and beauty born?" asked Yeats, not thinking of life north of Chicago); and there are shorter ones, like being unhappy at night and having your mother sing "Bye Baby Bunting" to you, or watching your parents dress up in tux and long skirt before going out. These and many more occasions, rules, jokes, bits of folk wisdom or middle-class pieties, provide frequent and satisfying confirmation of the reader's (at least this one's) own experience back then in the shades of memory. Yet it takes a while to feel comfortable in *Testing the Current*—so many names, so many details (*"il n'y a d'originalité et de vérité que dans les détails"* runs part of the epigraph from Stendhal). Nothing, it seems, is left out of the telling. Once submitted to, however, the book begins to repay our attention.

Still, the novel seems less than successful as a narrative whole—lively and acute as it is page by page. Being locked into the consciousness of a small boy, however rich that consciousness is made, proves to be a strain over 348 pages, especially since McPherson stays close to a fairly conventional novelese, for all the "poetry" in the going-to-sleep scene quoted above. There is an awful lot of "Tommy" in the book sentence by sentence (here as quoted from a random two pages): "Tommy loved to watch . . . Tommy marveled . . . Tommy thought . . . Tommy would sometimes sit . . . Tommy didn't know how . . . Tommy asked her why"—and many more. Sometimes it is hard to believe in this consciousness as (from the page just quoted) we are told that "Tommy would sometimes sit under the piano, feeling the boom of the tingling strings, watching his mother's small feet pumping up and down on the pedal"; the language, unfortunately, is straight out of D. H. Lawrence's poem "Piano." For all the irony involved in having Tommy's perceptions be inadequate to the furtive concealment of the grown-up world (his mother's involvement with a louche character named, appropriately, Lucien Wolfe, is very well rendered), there is perhaps a shade too much reverence cast over these *Kinderszenen* (the title of the opening prologue-like section, and of his mother's favorite piano piece).

Of course a celebratory and even reverential attitude toward the past, a rich nostalgia for childhood, is essential if the novel is to provide the pleasures of confirmation, which this one so clearly does. But a reader may want to compare *Testing the Current* with its distinguished and not well-enough known predecessor, Evan S. Connell's *Mrs. Bridge*, set in a similar time, in a Kansas City not remote from McPherson's Grande Rivière, and peopled with white middle-class citizens who go to the same clubs and parties and talk the same way as Tommy's parents and their friends. What Connell's novel does that McPherson's cannot is provide moments of high lyric pathos and of "low" comic embarrassment, and it does these things by maintaining its narrator's cool detachment from the scenes and people presented. By committing himself to Tommy McAllister, McPherson has gained solidity but runs the risk, not always successfully, of narrative claustrophobia. Still, this first novel stands comparison with Connell's masterpiece (I mean that word), and that is ground enough for praising William McPherson's labor of love.

**WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD**

William H. Pritchard, who teaches English at Amherst College, is the author of *Lives of the Modern Poets* (Oxford University Press).


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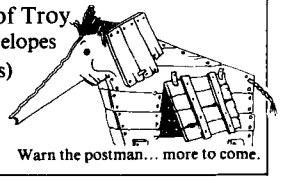

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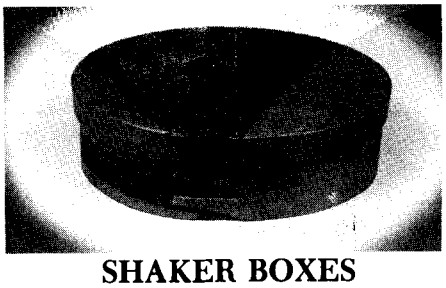

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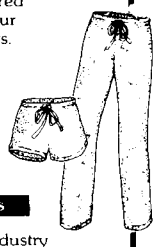

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# WASHINGTON DIARIST

## *Something for the Seder*

**THIS IS A TIME** that gives pause for a Jew in Washington. The reason is not the tawdry Reverend Jackson; his prejudices, poorly disguised by his rhetoric, should give pause, rather, to a black. The reason is Passover. In this city of politics it will be instructive to reflect upon this holy day of politics. For Passover is also that—a commemoration of the primal political scene of our culture, a re-creation of the introduction into consciousness of the most profound motive for political action, the love of liberty. To be sure, politics were a different affair when one of the actors, as the political scientists call them, was God. It is hard to imagine the nature of political and personal expectation in a world in which it was not implausible that the waters of a sea would part, in which an argument was settled by a miracle. The distinction between the ideal and the real disappeared. The individual was vouchsafed a certainty about the causes and the consequences of his actions about which we may only dream. For that reason it is foolish to make comparisons between their ancient politics and our modern politics. Moreover, the history of such comparisons is a morally mottled tale. As Michael Walzer shows in a forthcoming study of Exodus and revolution, the Jewish saga of liberation has been used *and* abused. (*Moses in Red* was what Lincoln Steffens titled one of his apologies for Bolshevism.) Exodus and revolution, then, with caution. But Exodus and democracy? Spinoza didn't think so. And he was right. Our very moderate system can seek little sanction from that very immoderate event. We do not possess such an absolute authority for the organization of our public life; and if we did, we would certainly renounce it. And there are mysteries, moreover, that pass all political understanding. Still, even in our disenchanted and democratic world, the Jewish fight for freedom is more than a subject for scholarship. It is possible to live by the light of imperfect comparisons, too. May my forefathers forgive me, therefore; I am about to make comparisons.

**THE AMERICANS** and the Jews are perhaps the world's most freedom-intoxicated peoples, but the difference between the American consciousness of freedom and the Jewish consciousness of freedom is notable. The American consciousness is natural and the Jewish consciousness is tragic. The explanation lies in history. For the Americans, freedom came first. For the Jews, slavery came first. It is not surprising that the revolutionaries of colonial America invoked the exodus from Egypt less often than the revolutionaries of other times and other places. George III was not exactly Pharaoh, nor was taxation without representation exactly a form of human suffering. America began free; its struggles were never to become free, but to stay free. Moreover, it never, for a single moment, lost its freedom. History, in other words, has made America naïve. It has made Americans the luckiest and the least understanding people in the world. Indeed, the happy American experience with freedom may be at the root of the time-honored American inability to find its proper global place. The appeal of American isolationism and the awkwardness of American interventionism—both may be owed to the American unfamiliarity with the political oppression and social injustice that is the common experience of most of the rest of the world. Our natural consciousness of freedom has equipped us badly for the spreading of it. That may be history's bad joke on the American century.

**THE RHYTHMS OF JEWISH** history have been different. (And so it has served the cause of civil rights as a sacred history for black Americans, whom I exclude from my crude generalization.) For the Jews, experience starts in Egypt. Freedom is in the future. Freedom is won, and it is lost, and sometimes it is won again. The Jewish consciousness of freedom, therefore, consists mainly in memory and in hope. No happiness is ever taken for granted. And no happiness is ever unmarred by the knowledge of its costs, and of its frailty. The Passover seder is an extended narration of a free people's origins in slavery. It is a way of complicating a celebration, of bringing sadness into happiness, of impressing even the fortunate with the imperfection of human life. The story of the Jews since Egypt, moreover, shows nothing that would warrant a revision of this grimness in their greatness. History, in short, has made the Jews the unluckiest and the most understanding people in the world. The preposterously large presence of Jews in the ranks of many of the West's movements of reform and revolution may be attributed in part to this Jewish national knowingness about suffering. The Biblical admonishment never to forget that we were strangers in Egypt has equipped us to speak for strangers, and to them.

**THERE IS A STRANGE SORT** of historical perfection, therefore, to Passover in America. It represents a kind of mingling of moral spontaneity with moral struggle. America is a revolution in Jewish history, too. Indeed, America and Israel may be described as the two great Jewish experiments in getting away from Europe. For its Jews, this country is not just their most recent address. It is a new kind of social and political dispensation: the unnaturally free are invited to feel naturally free. Of course, that is not exactly possible; for the Jews it is much too late for innocence. Still, sometimes the feeling sticks, sometimes it feels—dare a Jew say it?—normal. Being American is surely the second greatest exhilaration in Jewish history since the exile. (The first is the end of the exile itself.) There is no place outside of Israel where the seder is less strange to its surroundings than here.

**NOR IS THAT ALL.** The seder is not only a re-creation of unfreedom by the free. It is also a re-creation of want by the wantless. The guests at the seder are supposed to recline in comfort but speak of a flight by night. They are supposed to feed upon a great banquet but bless the matzoh, the bread of affliction. They are supposed to gather in the flush of friendship and family love but bring in strangers from the street. The seder, in other words, is designed to defeat indifference. There is a social vision in the heart of this party. As with freedom, so with prosperity: it is not to be mistaken for the whole of reality. All who are in need, come and partake, says the liturgy. The invitation follows immediately upon the liturgy's first mention of the exodus from Egypt. No sooner are we free than we are responsible. An appropriate thought for Passover 1984, in Ronald Reagan's Washington.

**L.W.**

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**Consumer Orientation**
No. 27 in a series
**Subject:** The Porsche philosophy of reliability on the track and in their street cars.

# 27 Porsche 944

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